

**EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE,
WITH REFERENCE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN
GAUTENG**

by

FRANCINA DIKELEDI MAHLO

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PROMOTER: PROF A. J. HUGO

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DECLARATION

I declare that: “EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE WITH REFERENCE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN GAUTENG” is my own work and all the sources used have been acknowledged.

F D MAHLO

DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents

William Malesela and Kgadi Manoko Christina Kaka.

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God the Almighty, thank you for giving me life, the strength and courage not to give up, you deserve all the praises.

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ABSTRACT

The policy of Inclusive Education (IE) in White Paper 6 (2001) acknowledges that all children can learn with support. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) in supporting Foundation Phase teachers in implementing Inclusive Education (IE) in Gauteng Province, South Africa. A lack of support for teachers and learners in IE has dominated current discussions on education. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2000:28), the establishment of an IE system in schools would require appropriate district as well as institution level support services, and more than just accepting learners with different learning needs in mainstream classrooms. Many teachers have not had the benefit of being trained to teach learners who experience barriers to learning, hence most find it difficult. Although specialist teachers in the form of Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) have been employed in the Foundation Phase to fill that gap and assist classroom teachers, the learners are not receiving the assistance hoped for. Based on an assumption that the failings may largely be systemic, this study therefore uses Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and a qualitative research design to examine the implementation of IE in selected schools, with seven LSTs being interviewed and observed, while documents pertaining to the support rendered were analysed. Seven principals and seven classroom teachers were also interviewed. The analysis employed Creswell's method and the findings highlighted factors affecting the implementation of IE. The factors include inadequate district support, socio-cultural issues, classroom and management factors, lack of resources and inadequate collaboration between the stakeholders. The study makes recommendations and suggests further areas of research.

Key words: Learning Support Teachers, Inclusive Education, Foundation Phase, support, District Based Support Team, Institution Level Support Team.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|---|
| DBST | District Based Support Team |
| DCES | Deputy Chief Education Specialist |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| ELRC | Education Labour Relations Council |
| FP | Foundation Phase |
| FSS | Full service school |
| GDE | Gauteng Department of Education |
| HOD | Head of Department |
| IE | Inclusive Education |
| ILST | Institutional Based Support Team |
| IQMS | Integrated Quality Management System |
| LOLT | Language of Learning and Teaching |
| LSTs | Learning Support Teachers |
| NDoE | National Department of Education |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organisation |
| SASA | South African Schools Act |
| SBST | School Based Support Team |
| SGB | School Governing Body |
| UNESCO | United Nations Organisation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Development. |
| WP6 | White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System |

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in schools will require not only accepting learners with different learning needs in mainstream classrooms, but also providing those learners with appropriate support. In South Africa, many in-service teachers have not had the benefit of being trained to teach learners who experience barriers to learning in their initial training, hence most classroom teachers find it difficult to support them. Prior to 1994, all teachers in South Africa had been trained initially as either mainstream or special school teachers. Teacher training programmes did not prepare the mainstream teachers with the skills to teach learners with barriers to learning. However, since the introduction of IE, mainstream teachers have had to assume new roles of accommodating learners with learning barriers in their classrooms. In order for teachers to perform to the highest level they also require support. Therefore, in Gauteng, specialist teachers in the form of Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) have been employed in the Foundation Phase to fill that gap to assist classroom teachers in the implementation of IE. However, although LSTs are assisting classroom teachers in the implementation of IE, from the researcher's experiences as an Inclusive Education Specialist those learners who are experiencing barriers to learning are not getting the assistance that was hoped for.

The researcher will argue that the impact of providing effective educational support services may be enhanced if greater attention were to be given to the identification of LSTs' experiences. The quality of educational support depends not only on the policy that a country adopts but also on the way in which learning support is organised (*ETH306W Only study guide 2004:98*). In South Africa, the success and failures of learning support services in implementing IE may depend on the way they are structured and organised.

Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff and Swart (2004:21) assert that before 1994 education support services in South Africa were managed by racially segregated education departments. Service provision was characterised by glaring inequalities and inconsistencies, a lack of coordination, and a lack of national focus and clarity on the nature of support services. It was generally believed that it was the learner with a deficit that was the problem rather than the curriculum or teaching and learning environment (Department of Education {DoE} 2001a:5). The process of reconceptualising education provision began in 1994, followed by the adoption of the policy document, White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001a:16) which came into effect in 2001, which acknowledged that all children could learn, and that all learners were different, with different needs.

Significantly, IE is now deemed appropriate as it can provide various levels and kinds of support to all learners, and it is stipulated in the White Paper 6 that support services be strengthened at the institutional, district, provincial and national levels. Recent policy documents in South Africa propose that support systems take a systematic approach, utilising district support teams that focus on the management and personnel support rather than providing direct face-to-face intervention for individual learners (Engelbrecht et al. 2004:21). Schools need to provide support in a natural setting, thereby minimising the likelihood of separating children with difficulties from their peers, as well as reducing stigmatisation (Naidu 2007:3). This implies that support services are important in a process of social transition, and need to be integrated into current mainstream structures.

The establishment of two teams may be required for such developments. The first is an Institution Level Support Teams (ILST), a structure within the school, the primary role of which is to coordinate a learner and teacher support system by encouraging the use of a variety of assessment methods, tools and techniques, thus reducing the need for formal assessment. The core members of the ILST may be (DoE 2001a:29):

- a) The principal (ex-officio)
- b) Head of Department (HOD) Foundation Phase

- c) (HOD) Intermediate or Senior Phase and teachers who have specialised skills and knowledge in learning support, life skills, guidance, counselling
- d) A representative from the school assessment team and learner-teacher support material.

This structure will support the teaching and learning process by further identifying and addressing the learner, the teacher and institutional needs. The second team, a District Based Support Team (DBST), is the core provider of such support at district level. Members are personnel currently employed at a district, regional or provincial level, and could include psychologists, therapists, remedial and learning support teachers, special needs specialists and other health and welfare professionals (DoE 2005b:16). The primary functions of the DBST are to support the ILST by strengthening the institutional support system and to promote the systematic and effective accommodation of learner diversity (DoE 2001b:18). For the purpose of this study, LSTs support learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development, and assist teachers with teaching and assessment strategies.

The DoE (1997: vii) defines LSTs as educators or teachers who have special competencies to support learners, educators and the system to ensure effective learning by all learners. This includes educators formerly referred to as “remedial”, “special class”, or “special needs” teachers. Ladbrook (2009:14) asserts that LSTs are employed by selected districts in Gauteng, with learners identified as having barriers to learning being referred to them by the school. The LST is a relatively new post, first created in selected Gauteng districts in 2004 in an effort to implement the policy as outlined by White Paper 6 (DoE 2001a:49), as a school-based and district dispensation post. DoE (2004:3) defines an LST as a qualified teacher with relevant experience and expertise in the field of special needs, remedial education and IE. It is evident that the DoE is committed to supporting learners who are experiencing learning barriers by creating this kind of post.

According to ETH306W Only study guide (2004:16), “if learners who experience barriers to learning are not assisted in an appropriate way it can lead to serious consequences for the learner and the country. Such learners move out of the

education system early and may be involved in crime. Therefore, LSTs are regarded as a valuable resource which already exists in selected schools in Gauteng. They assist learners and teachers in inclusive classrooms as some classroom teachers are lacking appropriate skills to help those learners. For the purpose of this study the focus is on LSTs because the researcher had an opportunity to interact with them, and because the work they are doing is regarded as important in facilitating the implementation of IE.

For Naidu (2007:6), a school-based support teacher is one who provides support in an inclusive setting for other teachers as well as for learners experiencing barriers to learning. According to this author, any teacher can be a support teacher as long as they are willing and have extensive experience in teaching. The researcher has a different viewpoint from that of Naidu, believing rather that an LST should have specialised experience, knowledge and skills to match the work for which they are responsible. In this case, knowledge and expertise in inclusive education can be the requirement as teachers are based in mainstream schools implementing it. The LST's role is to address barriers by participating in the ILST structure, continuous support of teachers, and capacity-building in learner support strategies, particularly for learners in need of high, moderate and low level support.

The focus of this study is to explore the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase, with reference to the implementation of IE in a particular district in Gauteng. This district under study uses LSTs for the implementation of IE, and employed the researcher from 2007 to 2008. There is currently a need for specific support strategies that will address the needs of LSTs and ensure successful implementation of IE in the selected district in Gauteng. From personal experience as an IE specialist, the researcher knows that LSTs are experiencing frustrations, difficulties and challenges in supporting Foundation Phase teachers. LSTs are supporting teachers in mainstream schools with learners with diverse learning needs.

Prior to recent developments, it was believed that assistance to learners with barriers was so specialised that only individuals with special training were capable of providing it. This led to learners experiencing barriers to learning being taught in special schools by specifically trained teachers. If they encountered difficulties in the mainstream they would be referred to educational support services where specially trained helpers had to assess the learners and assist them. Thus, the task of the school was simply to identify the learner and refer him or her for assistance. In contrast, IE suggests that assistance be handled by the class and subject teachers themselves, thus giving them the responsibility for solving the learners' problems before further steps are taken (*ETH 306W Only study guide*, 2004:99).

It is evident that classroom teachers who are responsible for teaching learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development should have the knowledge, skills and the right attitude to teach and guide those learners to reaching their highest potential. The importance of LSTs in this process cannot be overemphasised, because they assist classroom teachers in areas where they lack skills, attitudes and knowledge. In keeping up with the trends, South Africa's policy on IE is implemented in most schools.

Several decades ago, Gipps, Gross and Goldstein (1987:30) asserted that the task of assisting learners with barriers was the responsibility of the class teacher, perhaps assisted by a learning support service. The class teacher had hitherto been encouraged to identify and refer the learners, but responsibilities are changing, in that the teacher would now provide assistance to learners experiencing barriers without the knowledge or skills in that task. Henceforth, the LSTs system would be put in place in Gauteng, as elsewhere, to assist teachers in executing tasks to support the teachers, including those in the Foundation Phase, in making the vision of inclusion a reality.

Lack of support for teachers and learners in IE has dominated current discussions on education. According to the DoE (2000:28), the establishment of an IE system in South Africa would require appropriate district as well as institution level support services. However, there is a need for action to improve the current status quo.

The republic's Constitution (Act No 108, Section 29, Subsection 1 1996) emphasises that everyone has a right to basic and further education, and one of the principles of White Paper 6 is that all youths can learn, and that all learners at some stage need support. Mphahlele (2005:2) argues that Foundation Phase teachers should be empowered with effective teaching strategies in order to lay a good foundation for these learners. In contrast to Mphahlele's statement, the researcher argues that while the classroom teachers are still not yet familiar with teaching strategies, LSTs can be a useful resource which already exists in the system, assisting classroom teachers in schools, especially in the Foundation phase. LSTs rotate in their different schools, expecting to find learners with a diverse range of differences, either extrinsic or intrinsic.

Extrinsic barriers are those that are not within the learners themselves, but rather circumstances beyond or outside them, for example their environment, home, upbringing, teaching, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and socio-economic status. The inadequacy of the factors mentioned above affects the learners' development and learning and ultimately compounds the barriers. Meanwhile, intrinsic barriers are located within the learner; inter alia, physical, sensory, physiological, learning and developmental mental or intellectual impairments, single or multiple (CSATDP: 45). The learner who is not identified early and given appropriate support for the above barriers can experience barriers to learning.

The researcher argues that little is being done to provide support for LSTs, hence this study to find out their experiences. It is believed that the findings will contribute meaningfully to debates, through making recommendations for improvements to the current situation.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The motivation for embarking on this study was both professional and personal, in that the researcher is a qualified teacher and keen to improve the conditions of teachers at schools. Furthermore the researcher was employed by two provinces in South Africa, namely Mpumalanga in 2003-2006 and Gauteng province in 2007-

2008, as an IE specialist. Support offered to classroom teachers and learners experiencing barriers to learning was different in the two provinces, and there was lack of qualified education support staff both at the provincial, district and school level. In South Africa, the national DoE provides national policies and broad management, whereas the provincial departments coordinate implementation of the national framework. In relation to provincial needs, the schools are responsible for the practical implementation of policies, in this case the implementation of IE.

In Mpumalanga, as an IE specialist on learning matters under the umbrella of the Curriculum section, the researcher was responsible for assisting all learners experiencing barriers to learning, together with teachers, in the implementation of IE. That was made more problematic by the rural nature of the province, containing as it did a large number of schools, at great distances between each other, and with a shortage of staff in the education support service. In both provinces it was a norm for an education specialist to give priority to the monitoring of opening schools and matriculation examinations (Grade twelve), and take responsibility for motivating matriculants prior to their sitting for the examinations at the end of the year, especially in underperforming schools.

From 2007 to 2008 the researcher was employed by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) in the same capacity in the E-learning unit, Inclusion and Special Schools, also under the umbrella of Curriculum. The situation was different in Gauteng with regard to the implementation of IE and how the system functioned. There were LSTs who assisted the researcher to ensure that IE was implemented, as there was also a shortage of staff in the unit. It was a useful initiative by the GDE to use this kind of system as it allowed them to reach areas the IE Specialist could not. On the other hand, the researcher realised that the system did not have clearly stated guidelines, was not properly managed, was unstructured, and the LSTs did not know where they fitted in.

Although it is stated in the White Paper 6 (2001a:47) that the LSTs should be part of the DBST, the districts were not clear about the LSTs' roles as part of the larger system. This became a concern, as LSTs were otherwise doing a valuable job in the schools, with learners who experienced barriers to learning being able to get

help and showing marked improvement after their intervention. Based on the researcher's experience as an IE specialist, it was evident that the disparity between effective implementation of IE at different levels was a cause for concern. Together with the abovementioned problems, this served as motivation for the researcher to embark on the study.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since education support services are under-resourced and unable to deal with the large numbers of learners in need, their barriers to learning are not being addressed. There is a lack of the specialised staff, schools and finances needed for the necessary interventions, therefore the limited resources that are available should be valued (Vogel 2003:118). In particular, the LSTs that are available in mainstream schools in selected districts in Gauteng should be appropriately used, because if learners are not receiving necessary support they suffer and do not achieve the goals of their academic careers. Therefore, it was considered important to explore the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation phase with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education. In the researcher's opinion there is currently an absence of specific support strategies in the policies to address the needs of LSTs in order to ensure successful implementation of IE in South Africa, with particular reference to Gauteng.

Figure 1.1 (below) illustrates the nine provinces of South Africa and Gauteng is the province in which the study was conducted.



Figure 1.1. Provinces in South Africa: A map of South Africa showing the location of the nine distinct provinces. (SA-VENUES.com.online, Retrieved 11 August 2010)

Gauteng is one of the nine provinces of South Africa, and formed from part of the old Transvaal Province after South Africa's first all-race elections on 27 April 1994. It was initially named Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (or PWV) and was renamed 'Gauteng' in December 1994. Situated in the heart of the Highveld, Gauteng is the smallest province in South Africa, with only 1.4% of the land area, but it is highly urbanised, containing the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria. As of 2007, it had a population of nearly 10.5 million, making it the most populous province in South Africa (SA-VENUES, online Retrieved 11 August 2011)

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem investigated in this study is exploring the experiences of LSTs in implementing IE in Gauteng. The specific research question formulated to answer this research problem is:

- What are the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to implementation of IE in Gauteng?

The following sub-questions are posed to explore the study further:

- What are the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase in Gauteng?
- What strategies could be used to enhance the implementation of IE by the Learning Support Teachers in the Foundation Phase?

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are to explore the experiences of LSTs in supporting Foundation Phase teachers in implementing IE in Gauteng.

Flowing from this aim, the study will pursue the following objectives:

- To find out the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase Gauteng with reference to implementation of Inclusive Education.
- To find out the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng.
- To explore the strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of IE by the LSTs in the Foundation Phase.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is aimed at adding value to the domain of inclusive education, especially to the challenges the LSTs face in the Foundation Phase. The study aims to recommend valuable guidelines to policymakers and educational planners to develop and/or improve the situations. The study will also contribute to the knowledge base of available literature on the implementation of IE in South Africa and evoke suggestions and recommendations on possible and better ways of using the LST system to implement IE in the Foundation phase.

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY

In this study the researcher had the following assumptions, namely:

- that Learning Support Teachers are not provided with adequate or appropriate support when they support teachers and learners at schools
- that most learners who are identified as having barriers are having social problems
- LSTs' views on the implementation of Inclusive Education should be considered as they can be the future hope for implementing IE successfully
- classroom teachers are not coping with the demands of diverse needs learners' in their classes as proposed by Inclusive Education policy, therefore an intervention strategy of using LSTs would be ideal.
- LSTs cannot implement Inclusive Education policy alone; all the stakeholders involved in education should collaborate for the successful implementation of the policy
- Provision of appropriate resources is key to the success of policy implementation.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In all qualitative studies, theory should be present because no study can be designed without some questions being asked. According to Merriam (1998:2), a theoretical framework forms the “scaffolding” or the underlying structure of the study.

This study uses the ecological perspective of Bronferbrenner (1979:21), which affirms a vision of IE:

... Ecology of Human Development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between the settings, and by the larger context in which the settings are embedded.

The ecological perspective demonstrates how a micro-system, for example the home, is interwoven with the meso-system, for example the school, as well as the wider society, in determining the level of comfort and contentment human beings experience as they go about their life courses. The theory also explains the differences in the individual’s knowledge, skills and abilities and the role of support system to guide and structure the individual. The overlapping micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems all contribute to form the whole that the individual will perceive as positive or negative (Haihambo 2010:65).

The system of education could be a representative of various micro-systems that form the meso-system in this study, for instance teachers, district, school environment, provincial departments, support, resources that might be significant in explaining the experiences, attitudes, frustrations and motivation for LSTs to execute their duties. The theoretical framework used will be outlined in detail in the next chapter.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:63), the appropriate research methods should be those that are reliable and valid procedures for collecting and analyzing data particularly during the research. The study sought to investigate the experiences of LSTs in the implementation of IE in Gauteng. The researcher aimed to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation, in this case the experiences of the LSTs. The problem investigated in this study necessitated qualitative research, because the researcher wished to understand the situation from the participants' perspectives.

A plan or a map for the process of finding solutions to the research problem is a research design (Merriam 1998:44). For the purpose of this study a phenomenological design was undertaken, as LSTs' experiences were elicited and the researcher wished to generate guidelines for the implementation of IE by them in the Foundation Phase.

In this study, purposeful sampling was applied to select participants who on the basis of experience had been working as LSTs from 2006, of whom only 10 matched the criteria. Purposive sampling allows a researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some features or a process in which he or she is interested (Silverman 2000:104). It was assumed that LSTs who were in this position from 2006 to date would yield the most relevant information about the topic under investigation.

The researcher endeavoured to choose only participants who would be able to supply needed information, be prepared to participate in research and be willing to share the information (Morse & Richards 2002:20). The researcher approached LSTs who were currently implementing IE in primary schools, especially the Foundation Phase (Grade R- Grade three) in a particular Gauteng district. Purposive sampling does not include accessible or convenient sampling, but it incorporates those from whom the most can be learned and who would most accurately help the researcher to answer the research question (Silverman 2000:105).

The Foundation Phase was selected because it was regarded as the critical stage for promoting an interest in education and developing positive attitudes towards school. If the child fails at this stage she or he may be affected in her or his whole schooling (Joshua 2006:10). Only those LSTs who had a qualification in Remedial or IE, and had been supporting teachers for the full three years in the Foundation Phase, were studied.

Data collection is the vehicle through which researchers collect information to answer the research question and defend conclusions and recommendations based on the findings from the research (Mertens 1997:285). Three methods of data collection were used, namely interviews, observations and document analysis. One-to-one interviews not exceeding one hour were conducted in English after working hours until data saturation was reached. They were audio-taped with the consent of the participants and transcribed by the researcher. The research methodology is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

1.10 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Inclusive Education can mean different things to many people, with some emphasising disability only when they refer to inclusion but not mentioning the other barriers that could also affect learning, such as poverty or socio-economic status, and being affected or infected by HIV/AIDS, or victims of violence or xenophobia. For the purpose of this study, emphasis is on the other barriers that are often not documented as such. The dissertation is restricted to schools that are serviced by the LSTs; therefore the focus will mainly be on extrinsic and intrinsic barriers that can affect the learner in the Foundation Phase.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Creswell (2002:145) asserts that most researchers who use a qualitative approach address the importance of ethical considerations. The researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, desires and values of the participants. Permission to embark on the research was requested from the GDE, participating

schools and participants. In ensuring ethical research, the researcher adhered to principles cited by Lincoln and Guba (1994:300), namely informed consent, indication to participants of the voluntary nature of their participation, assurances of safety in participation as well as privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and the principle of trust. Ethical clearance was requested from the University Of South Africa (UNISA).

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS IN THE STUDY

The following section clarifies the terms and concepts central to understanding the objectives and purpose of the study.

Inclusion

Many definitions of inclusion have evolved around the world, and although various countries share a commitment towards it, it is becoming increasingly accepted that it has different meanings in different contexts. The Salamanca statement produced under the aegis of UNESCO in 1994 serves as the key document in guiding inclusive developments internationally. The framework that accompanies the statement, defines the scope of inclusion in the following terms (UNESCO 1994:59):

The guiding principle that informs this framework is that schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from remote or nomadic populations and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups.

Inclusion is used to describe the process by which learners, especially those who experience barriers to learning and development, have access to and participate in the general school system. The education system needs to adapt to ensure that diverse learning needs are met.

Inclusive Education (IE)

According to NCSNET/NCESS (1997:11), “Inclusive Education is defined as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language.” For Wade (2000:7), IE should represent a shift from a continuum of educational placements to one of educational services. In the South African context, DoE (2001:17) indicates that inclusion is a form of support for all learners, teachers and the system as a whole, so that the full range of learning needs can be met.

Learning Support Teachers (LSTs)

In South Africa, some literature refers to Learning Support Teachers as ‘Learner Support Educators’ (LSEs), though for the purpose of this study the researcher uses the term Learning Support Teacher (LST) as it is internationally used in most of the literature. LSTs support learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development and also assist Foundation Phase teachers with teaching and assessment strategies.

Learning Support Educators are those educators who have specialised competencies to support learners, educators and the system to ensure effective learning by all learners. This includes educators formerly referred to as ‘remedial’, ‘special classes’ or ‘special needs’ teachers. Such educators should have the capacity to adapt the curriculum to facilitate learning among learners with diverse needs and prevent learning breakdown. These educators may include those who have developed competencies to support learners with specific disabilities who may require specialised teaching and would play a central role in the centre-of-learning-based support team (DoE 1997: vii).

According to DoE (2004:3), a Learning Support Teacher is a qualified teacher with the relevant experience and expertise in the field of special needs, remedial education and IE background.

Their roles are to address barriers by participating in the ILST structure, providing continuous support to teachers, and building the capacity of teachers in support strategies to support learners.

Foundation Phase (FP)

The term 'Foundation Phase' refers to Grades R-3, and includes learners from six to nine years of age. This is a four-year phase, starting with the Reception year. The Learning programmes which are important in this phase are Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. The study will concentrate on LSTs who support teachers in this phase with the implementation of IE.

District Based Support Team (DBST)

A District Based Support Team (DBST) is the core provider of support at district level. Members of this team are personnel currently employed at a district, regional or provincial level, including psychologists, therapists, remedial and learning support teachers, special needs specialists and other health and welfare professionals (DoE 2005b:16). This team's primary function is to support the ILST. By strengthening the school-based support system, the systematic and effective accommodation of learner diversity may be promoted (DoE 2001a:18).

Institutional Based Support Team (ILST)

The Institutional Based Support Team (ILST) is the structure within the school, the primary role of which is to coordinate a learners' and educators' support system by encouraging the use of a variety of assessment methods, tools and techniques, thus reducing the need for formal assessment. In this study the ILST is sometimes referred to as the SBST (School Based Support Team) as it was initially called when the White Paper 6 was introduced. (DoE 2001a:29). This structure will support the teaching and learning process by further identifying and addressing the learner, the teacher and institutional needs. The core members of the ILST are the principal (ex-officio), Head of Department (HOD) Foundation, (HOD) Senior phase, and teachers who have specialised skills and knowledge in learning support, life skills, guidance and counselling, as well as a representative from the

school assessment team and learner-teacher support material (DoE 2001a:29).

Support

For the purpose of this study, support can be defined as all activities that increase capacity of a school to respond to diversity. Support services should be moving away from only supporting individual learners to supporting educators in the system, in order to “recognize and respond appropriately to the needs of all learners, thereby promoting effective learning” (DoE 1997:58). Furthermore, the DoE (2001a:19) also emphasises the training of personnel in order to focus on “supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met”.

A supportive environment in which there is collaboration amongst teachers, district officials, principals, parents and learning support educators is key to successful implementation of IE. According to Calitz (2000:16), support means a group of colleagues who are available to assist learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, therefore educational support services need to be organised and to clearly define the responsibilities of all role players in the implementation of IE.

Inadequate and inappropriate provision of support services will be to the disadvantage of the learners because the system and those responsible for the provision of services concentrate more on intrinsic barriers to learners, ignoring their lack of expertise with regard to assistance needed. (Mudau 2004:58). Support services provide a structure from which the process of inclusion can be facilitated and promoted.

For the purpose of this study, the more internationally accepted term ‘Learning Support Teachers’ (LSTs) will be widely used instead of ‘Learner Support Educators’, which is commonly used in Gauteng. Furthermore, the term ‘teachers’ will be used alternatively with ‘educators’ where the literature reviewed necessitates it. However, it is acceptable to use the latter term for teachers in the South African context. Most international sources, and even some South African ones, commonly refer to ‘teachers’. It is also noted that children, youth and pupils are also referred to as ‘learners’ in the South African context and in some

literature internationally. The term 'learner' is used in this study, except where the context of reviewed literature necessitates an alternative. It should also be noted that the term 'barriers to learning' is also used in this study repeatedly, this is however a South African preferred term. Most international literature, and even some literature in South Africa, commonly refers to 'special needs' and 'disability'. Learners who experience barriers to learning should be assisted with appropriate and relevant support strategies for IE to become a reality.

1.13 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is outlined as follows:

Chapter One serves to introduce the research topic. The problem statement and aims of the study have been outlined.

Chapter Two defines inclusive education and the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter Three defines support in inclusive setting

Chapter Four outlines the research design, methodology and research methods used in the study.

Chapter Five analyses the data collected and present findings supporting and answering the research question.

Chapter Six is a summary of the findings and draws conclusions to the study, making recommendations for further research.

1.14 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The aim of this chapter was to orientate the reader to the experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the Foundation Phase, with reference to Gauteng Province. The theoretical framework that underpins the study will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A theoretical framework positions the research in the discipline or subject in which the researcher is working (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004:25), enabling him or her to theorise about the research and make explicit the assumptions of the researcher about the interconnectedness of the way things are related in the world.

In all qualitative studies, theory should be present because no study can be designed without some questions being asked and, as Merriam (1998:2) argues, a theoretical framework forms the “scaffolding” or the underlying structure of the study and assists in answering these questions. Theory can be defined as a set of ideas, assumptions and concepts ordered in such a way that it tells us about the world, ourselves or an aspect of reality (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel 2005:9), in this study the experiences of LSTs in supporting Foundation Phase classroom teachers in the implementation of IE in Gauteng.

Truths and the full complexity of life cannot be captured by a single theory, and theory is useful when it can provide a set of organised principles that together with contextual knowledge can generate insights into specific situations (Swart & Pettipher in Landsberg et al. 2005:9). In this study, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory was used in order to explore the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to the implementation of inclusive education in Gauteng.

2.2 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theory is relevant to the study because it emphasises the interaction between an individual's development and the systems within the general social context. Bronfenbrenner's theory is an example of a multi-dimensional model of human development, which posits that there are layers or levels of interacting systems resulting in change, growth and development, namely physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural. What happens in one system affects and is affected by other systems (Swart and Pettipher in Landsberg et al. 2005:10), thus human behaviour, experiences and actions cannot be understood if the contexts in which they occur are not considered.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model explains the direct and indirect influences on a child's life by referring to the many levels of environment or contexts that influence a person's development. A major challenge to the present education system lies in understanding the complexity of the influences, interactions and interrelationships between the individual learner and multiple other systems to which he or she is connected (Landsberg et al. 2005:9). The learner does not exist in isolation from surrounding systems, but rather they help determine success in his or her academic career, whether the system of education, teachers, the school or the curriculum. If all the systems work well together all learners in schools, even those who are experiencing barriers, should benefit.

Furthermore, an individual is seen as part of the sub-systems of society, which are also interrelated. There are challenges at all of the levels which impact on the effective utilisation of LSTs in schools and therefore learners are affected in the process. LSTs support and assist teachers at schools to accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning to cope. The researcher considers the LSTs to be a valuable resource to schools, especially in the implementation of IE, with studies revealing that most of the classroom teachers lack the necessary skills to accommodate learners with barriers. Bronfenbrenner identifies five structures or environmental systems in which human beings develop, namely macro, exo, meso, micro, and chrono systems, to be described in detail in the next section.

2.2.1 Macro-system

Macro systems are the cultural, ideological and institutional contexts in which all the systems are embedded (Swart and Pettipher, in Landsberg et al. 2005:11). In the South African context the macro system can refer to the level at which policy decisions about education are made, viz. the national Department of Education (DoE). It provides the provinces with the guidelines to implement a particular policy according to their needs, including on Inclusive Education. However, at this level there is an absence of support strategies in the policies to address the needs of LSTs and ensure successful implementation of IE. During the time the researcher was conducting this study there were no clear structures or guidelines documented at this level to regulate the practices of LSTs. It is evident that South Africa has very well-written policies in place but their practical implementation is problematic.

2.2.2 Exo-system

Exo-systems are defined by Swart et al. (2005:11) as comprising one or more environments in which an individual is not necessarily directly involved as an active participant, but may influence or be influenced by what happens in the settings. Yorke (2008: 52) identified several problems and challenges in the exo system, notably the education system, social development, health services, the media, parents' place of work, community organisation, and resources - either human or financial - that are not readily available and that may delay service delivery to the provinces. It is clear that although the DoE has good policies in place, provision must also be made in terms of resources so that they can be well-implemented by the provinces. For the purpose of this study, exo system may refer to other systems in which the learners are not directly involved, for example the LSTs system that is not functioning as expected because of problems in the system. If the DoE is not providing or designing the guidelines which govern the LSTs' practices, this will in turn affect the learner who is supposed to benefit from their assistance.

2.2.3 Meso-system

Meso system are defined by Swart and Pettipher in Landsberg et al. (2005:11) as the relationships that develop and exist between the micro-systems, and influence the relationship between the school, districts and LSTs, as they interact with and modify one another. One may encounter differences even within the same province (such as Gauteng) because of the differences in needs of the environments which different districts offices serve (Sethosa 2001:197). The way the LSTs function in Gauteng differs according to context in which they are based, while in other districts they rotate on a daily basis, and at others are employed in aid classes or based at that particular school. Some are working as consultants to the schools, and only intervene when they are called by the schools. Therefore, the system has no uniform structure, which may mean that what happens in the school, district or Province can influence the way LSTs fulfil their duties and in turn affect the learner.

2.2.4 Micro-system

Micro systems are the immediate environments in which an individual develops, characterised by those individuals and events closest to one's life, and involving continual face to-face contact, with each person reciprocally influencing the other (Swart & Pettipher in Landsberg et al. 2005:11). The micro system involves the relationships within the crucial setting of the learner, in this study the school, home, LSTs, classroom teachers, parents and the principals, as the most immediate people who should ensure that the learner reaches his or her highest potential. At the micro level most of the teachers were not coping with learners experiencing barriers, so the LSTs who are more experienced in this area were employed. LSTs will get an opportunity to share ideas, emotions, feelings, thoughts and understandings they have on all the levels of the education system.

2.2.5 Chrono-system

The chrono-system includes the developmental timeframes that cross through the interactions between these systems and their influences on individual development. This means that at this level the attention will be on the learner, whether he or she has developed or showed an improvement as the systems interact.

As a summary of the various systems, therefore, the DoE is at the macro-level where policy is formulated, after which the nine provincial departments, at the exo-system level, are responsible for implementing it according to their provincial needs, followed by districts at the meso-level. Finally, at the micro-level, the schools are required to implement IE on a practical level. To ensure that every system is interacting together, so that a complete whole will be established, there should be feedback, monitoring and reporting strategies from the lowest level of the system to the highest. During the time of this study there was a 'grey area' between all the systems.

Figure 2.1 (below) Illustrates a suggested model that can be adopted to ensure that the LSTs' practices are regulated and receive the necessary support so that they can execute their duties in line with IE policy.

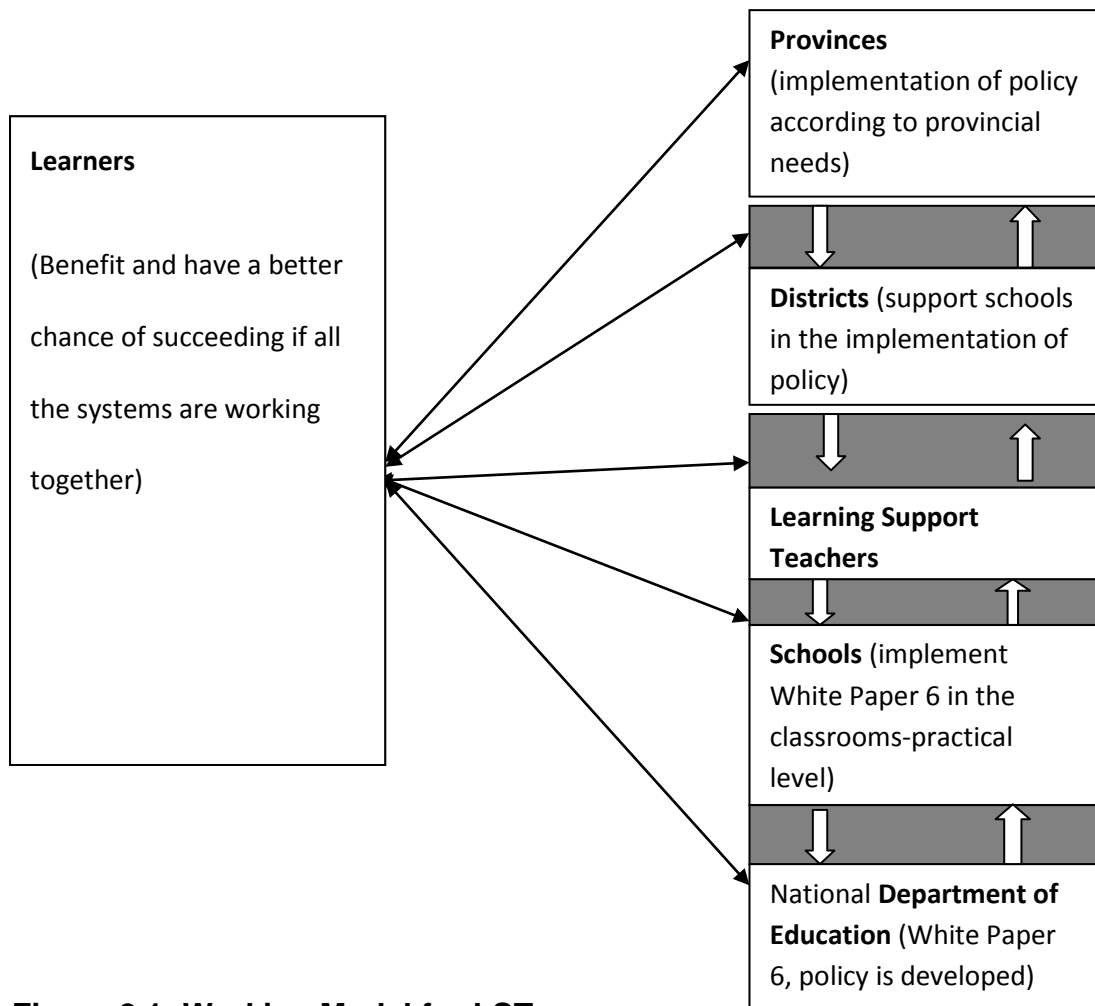


Figure 2.1: Working Model for LSTs

If LSTs are working closely with the schools and the district, the learner will be more likely to reach the highest potential, and if the learner succeeds both the country and the learner benefit. However, the contrary is also the case; for example, a learner who is experiencing barriers to learning and does not receive any help at school will probably drop out of school and become unemployable because of lack of skills. He or she will add to the number of people living in the poverty bracket and those drawing social grants because of an inability to provide for themselves.

In Figure 2.1 (above) there are arrows going in the opposite direction to indicate a supposed interaction and reporting back between each system, for the benefit of learners experiencing barriers. However, during the time of this study the system was fragmented, it had no structure and LSTs were unsure whether they belonged to the districts or the schools, as depicted by the shading in these 'grey areas'.

2.3 THE ECOLOGICAL THEORY

The ecological theory is based on the interdependence between different organisms and their environment, with every part important to ensure the survival of the whole system (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana 2009:39). The ecological model affirms Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which emphasises socially meaningful activity as an important influence on human consciousness. A leading proponent of social constructivism, Vygotsky, believed that human beings learn through interacting with their social environment and through the guidance of a more experienced person. He promulgated a 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), in which he categorised differences between what the learner could do and could not do with assistance from others. Interactions with adults and peers in the ZPD promote cognitive development (Vygotsky 1978:89).

The ecological model is an umbrella term adopted to refer to a range of social theories that emphasise the importance of recognising agency, being sensitive to local context, taking cognisance of social and interpersonal structure of society and understanding the centrality of interpersonal relationships in the life world of a child (Scott 2005:48). The child is viewed as a social being, whose ideas about self are shaped through interaction with others.

The researcher acknowledges that the ecological theory maintains that the environment plays a pertinent role in the functioning of a human being, and the LSTs are directly affected by all the systems in the implementation of IE. If the systems do not work together or support each other then the vision of IE would not be realised. This theory acknowledges the vision of IE as it emphasises that:

The Ecology of Human Development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between the settings and by the larger context in which the settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner 1979:21).

The ecological theory demonstrates how the micro-system, for example the school, is interwoven with the exo-system (provincial department), the meso-system (the district), and macro-system (DoE), are interrelated and affect each other. This may include factors that can directly influence the effective implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase by LSTs. It may include appropriate training of LSTs (pre-service and in-service), community and parental involvement, professional advice and referral services, participation of persons with disabilities, assistant teachers, provision of mobility and teaching aids, financial support, efficient leadership, assistance in curriculum adaptations and government and legal support (Arbeiter & Hartley 2002:63).

The relevance of the ecological model can be clearly realised in this context, for instance if the LSTs are to be supported in executing their duties then all the factors that might have contributed to problems should be explored. The importance of the ecological model cannot be overemphasised, because if effective support is to be rendered to classroom teachers and learners by LSTs then the structures should be well-coordinated. For the purpose of this study, needs of the LSTs are conceptualised in terms of hierarchy of needs that impact on their performance in schools that they support. The ecological model of IE focuses on the LSTs and the different systems or ecologies that are part of one's environment, but in this study the focus will be more on the LSTs and the different systems and ecologies that affect them.

The ecological model emphasises the inter-relatedness of all the parts into a whole. For example, a school has staff, learners, teachers, and heads of department, serving as sub-systems all working together towards one goal, i.e., the education of a learner. LSTs are supposed to work in collaboration with the

teachers to develop the child's potential, without sending him or her away to a special school. That particular learner will then be able to access education in the neighbourhood where s/he lives. Identification and understanding of the issues in the LSTs' environment that might be affecting the LSTs progress should also be considered. There are an increasing number of learners being referred to special schools from their local mainstream schools (DoE 2001a:47) because the teachers do not know how to accommodate them in their classrooms. Therefore, LSTs are employed to bridge the gap that the teachers are unable to.

Vygotsky's theory takes a constructivist perspective of the social environment as a facilitator of development and learning. Schunk (2004:122) argues that education cannot be taken out of context, so placing learners in a special school will remove them from the community in which they belong. There are learners with severe difficulties who cannot be catered for in a nearby school, thus compelling them to access those services at the special school. However, it will be problematic, for instance, to have a blind learner at a mainstream school in which there are inadequate resources, for example no teacher trained in Braille. IE policy advocates that learners who experience barriers to learning should as far as possible be educated in their neighbouring schools with appropriate support. If a school admits a learner who is blind, there should be a teacher who can teach various grades in Braille, as failure to do so will be regarded as "dumping" him or her in the school without any support.

2.4 THEORY OF MATURATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Piaget's theory of maturational development affirms the principles of IE, and as Donald et al. (2002:167) noted, according to the theory, as a child develops the mind undergoes a series of reorganisations, and he or she moves into a higher level of psychological functioning. In an IE setting, the pace at which the learner learns and the learning styles are taken into consideration, so that s/he can be supported accordingly. Piaget's theory (Donald et al. 2010:49) assumes that the environment stimulates the child, making him or her, a mature individual. This implies that if the learner is supported according to individual pace, potential and

learning style, schools will not experience a large number of learners with learning problems, drop-outs and high failure rate. LSTs are employed at mainstream schools to fulfil the purpose of supporting learners with barriers who can be remediated. In addition, they minimise the possibility of misplacing learners in special schools who could be remediated in mainstream schools by implementing IE.

Special schools and education support services are not always within reach of communities, hence the introduction of IE so that the learners can be supported in their neighbouring mainstream schools. These learners can only receive appropriate support if teachers have the necessary skills and competencies to support them. LSTs who are trained in IE or remedial education can provide support to the teachers through strategies that could assist learners who are experiencing barriers to learning collectively and on an individual basis.

A framework which incorporates classroom teachers receiving the opportunities to deal with learning problems would pay special attention to the environmental or situational factors that may be contributing to the problem, and so enhance the success of dealing with them in an appropriate manner. A learner's problem in the classroom can be understood if the teachers also understand the background of the learner and whether he or she has had similar problems before. The argument of le Roux (2004:24), that a learner is part of a wider social community, contributes to the establishment of such a framework.

Vygotsky's theory is also relevant here, as it emphasises the utilisation of the learners' strengths and what they can do with the assistance of others (Donald et al. 2010:55) in this instance the LSTs. The LSTs play a pivotal role in that they use their own strengths, knowledge and expertise as a valuable resource for the teacher and learner, whilst drawing on the assistance of the principals, classroom teachers and rest of the school community.

This relates to the meso-level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, as it emphasises the relationships between systems. When working with learners, LSTs acknowledge that all learners have a potential to learn but that potential is waiting to be

unlocked by an adult. This means also helping learners who experience barriers to learning, affording them recognition, respect and a sense of belonging. Collaboration between the teacher and the LSTs is important because the latter have the skills relevant to supporting learners with barriers. Teachers should try to teach learners the ways in which they can learn, by using different ways of teaching, as learners have different learning styles. Foundation Phase teachers should be empowered with effective teaching strategies in order to lay a good foundation for learners.

Taking into consideration the theories discussed in the above section, it may be possible to effectively implement IE for the benefit of the country and all learners, including those experiencing difficulties in learning. South Africa has policies which appear credible on paper but which face problems in implementation. The researcher argues that the vision of IE can only be realised if appropriate support structures are in place, and the system is functioning effectively to form a complete whole.

According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001:6), IE is not about how to assimilate individual learners with identified barriers to learning into existing forms of schooling, but rather about restructuring schools and education systems so that they can accommodate the learning needs of every individual. It implies that in an inclusive setting, schools and teachers should create a positive learning environment that supports the diverse needs of all learners.

LSTs are supposed to be working together with schools and Foundation Phase classroom teachers in order to develop the child's potential. This practice offers classroom teachers opportunities to learn to deal with learning problems by paying special attention to the environmental or situational factors that may be contributing to the problem, and so enhance the success of dealing with them in an appropriate manner. Key to their effectiveness is identification, prevention, minimising and removal of barriers to learning (Burden 1999:38).

The concept of learning support acknowledges the potential of learners each to grow at their own pace towards a maximum level of independence in learning,

using strategies and practicing learning styles and each reaching a level of achievement with own unique abilities. It further relies on collaboration of people from the systems to which the learners belong, to participate variously in the process of their learning (Bouwer 2005:48). The concern of this study is that learners at schools should be allowed to learn at their own pace and be provided with support where necessary, as emphasised by the WP6 on Inclusive Education, DoE (2001a:16). This will require the use of appropriate personnel to assist in addressing the abovementioned issue. In this case LSTs are relevant because they possess the appropriate skills and experience. It is then important to understand what Inclusive Education is.

2.5 DEFINING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Wiersma and Jurs (2005:32) state that reviewing literature helps the researcher to put proposed study in proper context and to devise inquiries that have not been made before. In reviewing literature on experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to the implementation of IE, the researcher endeavoured to provide the guidelines that will be used for the implementation of IE by them, as it seems to be fragmented. This particular use of LSTs has not been covered by widely by previous studies, especially in a South African context.

In the White Paper 6, DoE (2001a:16), Inclusive Education and training is defined in policy terms, and acknowledges that all children and youth can learn and need support, accepting and respecting that all are different in some ways and have different learning needs that should be equally valued. Education structures were to be enabled, through systems and learning methodologies designed to meet the needs of the learners. IE is broader than formal schooling, with learning occurring in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures. It is intended to change attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula, and the environments to meet the needs of the learners. In maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning, it aims at empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to

participate critically in the process of learning.

It is evident that learners will require different kinds of support, so the education support service needs to be strengthened in order for all the needs to be catered for. LSTs are another means or strategy that could be used to effectively implement IE. The definition of IE by the NCSNET/NCESS in Chapter One is in line with the 1994 Salamanca Statement that reaffirmed the international trend of universal education. Regular education with an inclusive orientation is the most effective means for combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming attitudes, and building an inclusive society. If an effective education for the majority of children is created, it would improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO 1994: IX). When the South African DoE is able to meet the different needs of learners and teachers, they will therefore be contributing to the achievement of a global goal.

According to Clough and Corbett (2000:4), IE is a social process which engages people in trying to make sense of their experience and helping one another. To provide quality education there should be policies and plans to deliver such services, including appropriate allocation of resources. IE is concerned with removing all barriers to learning and provides quality education, especially to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, and the participation of all learners who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. It is the responsibility of the classroom teachers to motivate the learners and keep them interested and motivated, and the LSTs can help them in preparing lessons with these aims.

Different views of inclusion exist and there is no single perspective on it within a single country or school (Ainscow 2000:77). One definition, by the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI 1995:9) in American schools included provision to all students, including those with significant disabilities, of equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services. They would receive needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate classrooms in their neighbourhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. Accepting learners with disabilities is

only a part of inclusion, as a learner should also be accepted regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, and disability or HIV status.

It is important to recognise that inclusivity is complex, but it should not be seen as an issue of placing learners with diverse needs and barriers in regular classes, without the support related to their actual barriers. In this case, the LSTs are one kind of support that is provided for the learners and classroom teachers, but it is crucial to understand that the LSTs' needs are catered for by the system and whoever interacts with them. It should be seen as a model of holistic development, modifying and adapting teacher attitudes to enable all learners to fully engage with the curriculum.

Forlin (2004a:13) asserts that IE is not only a new paradigm that has its own language, but actually challenges traditional attitudes, beliefs and understanding of inclusion. In this study, inclusion is seen as challenging the traditional way in which education is organised, with the classroom teacher no longer the only person who teaches the learner. If the learner experiences a barrier that the teacher is not able to handle, a specialist can be contacted, in this case the LST. The practice raises issues of teachers being comfortable in their own classrooms, with the LSTs being perceived as advisors on teaching methods and/or providers of programmes to assist learners with barriers. This supports one of the principles outlined in the White Paper 6, DoE (2001a:16), namely that IE is about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula, and the environments to meet the needs of the learners.

According to Grenot-Scheyer, and Fisher and Staub (2001:3), systematic inclusion merges the reform and restructuring efforts of general education with special education inclusion. Every learner should have the opportunity to learn in a number of different places, grouping teachers together to provide learning support to all the children who are experiencing learning barriers. LSTs are dedicated to different schools and are working together with classroom teachers to provide learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning. For the purpose of this study it is assumed that LSTs are providing support to the classroom teachers, but the question arises as to whether they are achieving what they are

expected to by the employer. If not, what challenges are they facing which prevent them from doing so?

The concept of learning support acknowledges the potential of learners each to grow at their own pace towards a maximum level of independence in learning, and can be achieved by using strategies and practicing learning styles so that all reaches a level of achievement in accord with their own unique abilities. It further relies on collaboration of between the systems to which the learners belong, and their various forms of participation in the process of teaching and learning (Bouwer 2005:48). According to the White Paper 6, DoE (2001a:16), learners at schools should be allowed to learn at their own pace and be provided with support where necessary. Such idealism, however, will require the employment of appropriate personnel to assist in addressing the abovementioned issues.

2.5.1 International Trends in Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is now a worldwide movement and countries experience its implementation differently. The researcher reviewed literature on the following countries:

In Australia, similarly to European countries, there has been a continuing increase in the number of students with special needs now being educated in regular schools. Regular classrooms have become more diverse with inclusion of greater proportions of students with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties. Support for these students is provided through a number of different avenues and varies between the states and territories (Forlin 2001:121). This implies that South Africa is not the only country embracing the principles of inclusion by accepting learners with different barriers to learning. It is moving away from using specially trained personnel for learners with learning problems but instead the classroom teachers need to accommodate those learners in their ordinary classrooms. Support for learners is provided differently across the provinces since they each have different needs and the contexts are not the same. However, since the teachers were not trained in their initial training to teach learners with barriers, the use of LSTs is

relevant.

According to Choate (2000:2), the USA was one of the first Western countries to introduce detailed anti-discrimination legislation in education of children with special needs. A major change was realised in 1975 in the way schools were functioning, with the enactment of Public Law 94-142, known as Education for All Handicapped Children Act, and which gave directives that students with disabilities be taught in the same settings as peers without disabilities. Furthermore, learners with disabilities are legally entitled to free appropriate public education that meets their needs; and historically marginalised minorities have for decades contributed a disproportionately large proportion of the high incidence of disability categories which are based on clinical judgment.

In Canada, all learners are accommodated in the mainstream with specialised support (Peters 2004:10). The study by Porter (2000:64) reveals that Canada's resource teachers are responsible for providing direct and effective support for the classroom teachers. According to Thomas (2004:34), in India, the rapid increase in special schools has undermined the development of IE, whereas in the UK there is little or no commitment among teachers to it, though a good deal of practice in the classrooms (Croll & Moses 2000:8). In Norway, Inclusion policies are realised in practice and the factors that affect the success of inclusion are bound by time and location (Croll & Moses 2000:9). UNESCO (1994:2) maintains that Inclusive Education is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children.

It should be noted that education has to be of a quality that keeps learners motivated and interested in learning. To provide a quality education there need to be policies and plans to deliver such services, including appropriate allocation of resources. Inclusive Education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning and provides quality education especially to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, and the participation of all learners who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. In a study of Australian community attitudes towards IE, respondents stated that people in general felt uncomfortable when interacting with individuals with disabilities, emotional behaviour and/or

communication disorders. Many believe that this is due mainly to lack of knowledge and understanding of the diverse range of learning needs (Disability Services, Education in Queensland 2000: vi).

According to Ainscow (2000: 77), different views of inclusion exist and there is no single perspective on it within a single country or school. In the 1990s, the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion in American schools developed the following definition:

Provision to all students, including with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids, support services, in age-appropriate classrooms in their neighbourhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society.

Inclusive Education should be seen as a model of holistic development, modifying and adapting teacher attitudes to enable all learners to engage fully with the curriculum.

According to Engelbrecht (2006:254), the Salamanca statement produced under the aegis of UNESCO in 1994 serves as the key document in guiding inclusive developments internationally. The framework which accompanies the statement, defines the scope of inclusion in the following terms (UNESCO 1994:59):

The guiding principle that informs this framework is that schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from remote or nomadic populations and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups.

The following section outlines some of the literature from African countries.

2.5.2 Developing countries

Literature from many African countries shows that often disability is linked to curses, sinful behaviour and disobedience to religious expectations (Haihambo & Lightfoot 2010:80). In Zambia, for instance, the policy of the existing government includes the following cornerstones regarding education for children with special needs and disabilities:

- The Ministry of Education will ensure equality of educational opportunity for children with special educational needs (SEN).
- The Ministry is committed to providing education of particularly good quality to children with SEN.
- The Ministry will improve and strengthen the supervision and management of special education across the country. (Alasuutari, Chibesa & Makihonko 2006:104)

Ethiopia has also followed international trends in promoting Inclusive Education (Tirussew 2006:64), with reports over the past few years stating that the country has seen a number of special classes being opened at regular schools, the challenge being characterised by shortage of instructional material, non-responsive school environments and lack of back-up support for children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

In Zimbabwe, Inclusive Education involves the identification and minimisation or elimination of barriers to students' participation in traditional settings, i.e., schools, homes, communities and workplaces, and the maximisation of resources to support learning and participation (Mutepfa, Mpofu & Chataika 2007:343). Mpofu's argument is that there is no specific legislation for IE, although a number of government policy issues are consistent with its intent. Namibia is also experiencing various challenges regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education, the principles of inclusion not having been understood by stakeholders such as policymakers, school principals, teachers, parents or communities (Haihambo 2010:68).

Research indicates that Inclusion is a major challenge to African school systems, with a lack of human and material resources not uncommon. Uganda has been addressing the educational needs of disabled children as part of universal primary education since 1996 (Ndeezi 2000:28). Evidence suggests that many African countries have made efforts to implement IE, although there are diverse challenges that each country faces. In a study in Botswana, (Abosi 2007:196) argue that schools are already experiencing difficulties in meeting the needs of regular learners, due to large class size, untrained teachers, inadequate teaching techniques, transportation problems, lack of resources and lack of facilities.

Schools in South Africa are faced with a challenge of being inclusive and building a culture of learning and teaching in which quality education becomes a reality (Naicker 2005:232). Research revealed that the attitudes of teachers towards educating learners with diverse barriers to learning have been put forward as a decisive factor for making schools more inclusive (Engelbrecht et al. 2001:10). In a study conducted by Hay, Smit and Paulsen (2001:216), teachers felt unprepared and unequipped to work in Inclusive classrooms. Further, Engelbrecht et al. (2001; 2003) conducted two studies focusing on coping skills of teachers who had learners with Down's syndrome in inclusive classrooms. The findings were that teacher's experienced stress due to lack of support and inappropriate training for inclusive programmes.

It was evident in a study conducted by Bothma, Gravett and Swart (2000:v) on the attitudes of primary teachers towards IE that their beliefs in South African policy of Inclusive Education were negative, and that their attitudes could become a critical barrier to successful implementation of the IE policy. From the above literature, one can assume that to implement Inclusive Education successfully requires much work, because teachers in the educationally inclusive setting are less positive due to poor specialised training in working with learners experiencing barriers.

According to le Roux (2004:12), IE aims to establish opportunities to ensure the development of the full potential of all learners, whilst acknowledging that they can learn and succeed within mainstream education but need support. Inclusion promotes equal participation and non-discrimination against all learners in the

learning process, irrespective of their abilities within a single education and training system, and with a continuum of learning context and resources according to the need (DoE 2001b:6).

2.6 MODELS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There are different models of Inclusive Education but for the purpose of this study the researcher will focus on the following two models that are dominant in South Africa.

2.6.1 The Medical Model

According to Joshua (2006:3), the medical model assumes that barriers to learning reside primarily within the learner and that learner support should take the form of specialist, typical medical interventions. Child development in this model is often used to understand a child as a “patient”, needing accurate diagnosis and treatment, and with that diagnosis being made by a professional. This led to the idea that “children with special needs” need to be educated separately (DoE 2005a:16). According to this model the learner who is different, must adapt or change to fit in the system, following the same curriculum as the rest of the class and completing the work at the same time. In this model, many learners who experience barriers to learning drop out of the system, primarily because of an inability of the system to recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs.

Sidogi (2001:13) argues that education of learners with physical impairments was to a large extent influenced by the medical, clinical or healing profession. In this model, learners are grouped into categories according to their medical diagnosis, then placed and taught at special schools that provided for their conditions, for example blindness or deafness. They had limited opportunity to interact with other learners who were regarded as ‘normal’. Learners would be sent away to a special school, away from the community in which they were born or raised, which is in effect a form of exclusion. In the researcher’s opinion, the medical model is used

as another form of subtle discrimination, because when the learner is taken away to a special school, she or he will be isolated from people in the community, from peers and the society. That learner may not be holistically socialised as he or she thinks in terms of being different from others and so deserving to be taken away. Not surprisingly, the medical model receives little attention in discussion circles and has largely given way to the ecological model.

2.6.2 The Ecological Model

Jekinson (2001:21) sees the ecological model as a study of the relationships between an organism and its environment. To this author it therefore focuses on the learner and the different systems or ecologies that are part of one's environment, emphasising the interrelatedness of all the parts into a whole. For example, a school has staff, learners, teachers, and HoDs, serving as sub-systems that are all working together towards one goal that is the education of a learner. For the purpose of this study, LSTs are supposed to be in collaboration with the teachers in order to develop the child's potential, without taking him or her away to a special school. That particular learner will then be able to access education in the neighbourhood school. This model offers teachers opportunities to deal with learning problems by paying special attention to the environmental or situational factors that may be contributing to the problem, and so enhance the success of dealing with them in an appropriate manner. Scott (2005:12) and le Roux (2004:24) share the belief that a learner is part of the wider social community.

The learner is viewed as a social being, whose ideas about him or herself are shaped by interaction with others. If a learner is experiencing a specific problem, for example poverty or the environment, and the school does not accommodate him or her, the problem may persist and the learner may later drop out of school or begin stealing. In this case the system has failed the learner because it could not provide for his or her needs, for example with a feeding scheme of some kind. According to le Roux (2004:11), every learner is an indivisible psychobiological organism whose cognitive development and learning are the outcome of his or constructive interaction with all natural, cultural and social contexts by which her

existence is defined. Furthermore, barriers to learning and development can occur in any part of the system, and the context in which the learner is socialised affects him or her in later life.

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the ecological model is the most appropriate for the effective implementation of IE. Taking into consideration all the factors that affect the development and learning of a learner, for example biological, physical and psychological, then the system of education will each assist teachers in identifying and accommodating learners with problems. Inclusion involves various kinds of good practices in teaching that provide all learners with learning barriers with the necessary support. The researcher will focus on the experiences of LSTs in Gauteng, as it is assumed that they should provide collaborative help to classroom teachers in the implementation of IE, especially in the Foundation Phase.

2.7 EXPECTATIONS ON FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS

The term 'Foundation Phase' refers to Grades R-3, and includes learners from six to nine years of age (DoE White Paper 5, Document Grades R-3, 1997:9). This is a four-year phase, starting with the Reception year. The learning programmes which are important in this phase are Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. Davis (1994:9-12) affirms that during this phase a learner develops in totality, that is, as a physical being who develops control over his/her gross and fine motor coordination, as a psycho-social being who is able to control his/her emotions, and as a cognitive being who is able to comprehend the surrounding world. This is the phase in which the foundation of learning is laid effectively and is a critical time when interest in education is promoted, and positive attitudes towards school and self concepts are developed. Joshua (2006:10) maintains that if a child fails at this stage, he or she will be adversely affected and may even drop out of the schooling system before having had an opportunity to explore his or her learning potential.

The professional life of a teacher is rapidly changing as roles are added. With the increasing change in the educational reforms has come greater inclusion of

learners with diverse learning needs and barriers. Teaching is not a simple, straightforward enterprise, but ranks in the top quartile on complexity for all occupations, and this inherent complexity make it a demanding profession to master (Snowman and Bihler in Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart & Eloff 2003:1). One strategy in the development of a single inclusive education system is the Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS).

The Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) targets all learners in urban and rural settings who need support, and not only learners with disabilities, specifically those from the poorest communities in townships, informal settlements or rural areas, as they have previously suffered from the unavailability of and lack of access to services (DoE 2005f:3). This strategy outlines the role of teachers especially in the Foundation Phase, parents, managers and support staff within the new framework of a completely new vision of how support should be organised. The role of the Foundation Phase teachers and support staff are more relevant to the study as the researcher wishes to explore the experiences of LSTs in that phase with reference to the implementation of IE. The teachers should identify learners experiencing barriers to learning as early as possible within their phase and give necessary support, observing learners carefully in all the Learning Areas so that necessary adaptations can be made.

According to DoE (2005f: 58) teachers should identify learners who:

- are in need of an enriched programme
- are in need of a support programme
- require diagnostic help in specific aspects of a learning programme
- have a learning barrier
- are over-aged
- have problems because of mismatch between home language and the language of teaching, learning and assessment
- have physical disabilities, e.g., vision, speech
- have health problems, e.g., illnesses, hunger

- have problems with emotional stability, for example due to harassment or violence
- do not attend school regularly
- shows signs of abuse or neglect.

The SIAS document is thus very clear on which learners could be in need of support. It is affirmed that previously the responsibility of assisting learners with barriers to learning lay with specially qualified persons employed either by educational support services or special schools. The procedure was as follows:

- The class teacher identified learners experiencing barriers to learning
- The teacher discussed the matter with the principal
- The teacher made a written appointment with the educational support services
- The educational support services assessed each learner individually, using such means as formal assessment media (IQ and other tests)
- Depending on the findings of the assessments, one of the following methods were adopted:
 - (a) The learner was referred to a special school
 - (b) The learner was given individual assistance by the learning support service
 - (c) The learner was referred to a private person, e.g., a psychologist or therapist, who had to be paid by the parents for help
 - (d) The school was given specific guidelines for assisting the learner, for instance through placement in a special school (ETH306W Only study guide 2004:100)

This implied that teachers and schools did not view the assistance of learners experiencing barriers to learning as their responsibility, but rather their duty was only to identify and refer the learners to more specialised people. Because there were a limited number of persons working with the educational support services, the workload was too much and the names of learners experiencing barriers to learning might remain on the waiting list for months before they were granted an appointment. In the meantime the situation of the learners deteriorated and their

position became complex. The importance of LSTs in this situation cannot be overemphasised as they provide assistance where education support services personnel cannot reach. They are an addition to the unit that is assumed to be suffering because of shortage of staff.

However the modern method of support in inclusive education focuses on the teachers' roles as follows:

- The teacher's responsibility is to identify and assess learners experiencing barriers to learning on the basis of their schoolwork or some problem that they may be experiencing in that area.
- The teacher helps the learners as s/he would normally deal with the problems that occur in class.
- If the problem is not solved, additional attention has to be devoted to it. The teacher now proceeds to tackle the problem in a more penetrating way in order to find out more about its nature and causes. This enables the teacher to provide the learner with help in a more intense and probably more appropriate way.
- If the problem remains unsolved, the teacher realizes that additional assistance is needed, and he/ she now collects all the data on the matter, makes brief notes about the case, and proceeds to discuss it with the ILST. The team will give the teacher practical hints on how to deal with the problem, which the teacher puts into practice. Joint action continues until the problem is solved or until it is realized that the learner needs more specialized help.
- If the problem persists or remains unsolved after the attempts of the teacher and the ILST, then the team would bring in regional or district assistants (ETH306W Only study guide, 2004:100).

For the purpose of this study, 'district assistants' are the officers who are working in the Inclusive and Special Schools (ISS) unit in Gauteng, and will also include the LSTs. It is evident that the abovementioned procedure requires teachers to have specific knowledge and skills to enable them to identify and help learners who experience barriers to learning in their classes, cultivating their positive

attitude towards learners experiencing barriers to learning to ensure that they are willing to accept these learners in classes and assist them. LSTs have a responsibility for supporting learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development, and assist teachers with teaching and assessment strategies. It is evident that the teachers do not conceptualise their roles clearly as the inclusive education policy requires them to perform some duties that they were not used to.

The provision of high quality support services and resources, including personnel, may lead to an easier conceptualisation of the roles of teachers in an inclusive setting. If the teachers understand their roles and how they need to assist the LSTs so that learners who are experiencing barriers to learning are supported and assisted, then the LSTs will be able to perform their tasks more effectively.

There are seven roles associated with competencies of teachers in South Africa, according to the DoE (2002e:12-30):

1. Learning mediator – the teacher will mediate learning in a manner which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners, including those with barriers to learning.
2. Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and material – the teacher will select sequence and pace the learning in a manner sensitive to the differing needs of the subject/learning area and learners.
3. Leader, administrator and manager – the teacher will make decisions appropriate to the level, manage learning in the classroom. The competencies are made in a democratic way which support learners and colleagues and which demonstrate responsive to changing circumstances and needs.
4. Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner – and the teacher will achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth pursuing reflective study and research in their learning area, in broader professional and educational matters and in other related fields.
5. Community, citizenship and pastoral role – the teacher will practice and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others.

6. Assessor – the teacher will understand that assessment is an essential feature of teaching and learning process and know how to integrate it into this process.
7. Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist – the teacher will be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods and procedures relevant to the discipline, subject, learning area, phase of study, professional or occupational practice.

Considering these seven roles of teachers it is obvious that teachers have a great responsibility towards the learners they are teaching. The White Paper 6 states that classroom teachers now have a responsibility towards learners with diverse needs since they are being educated in the ordinary classes. The importance of classroom teacher support to the success of Inclusive Education cannot be overemphasised. Giangreco et al. (2010:251) acknowledge that support provided to classroom teachers is essential, and although classroom teachers are not expected to have all the answers or undertake the task of inclusive education alone, they must realise that while the foundational principles of teaching and learning do not change those principles may need to be applied differently or used more systematically.

Singal (2010:52) maintains that even when children with disabilities do attend the mainstream classrooms; teachers do not always regard them as their primary responsibility. This is contrary to the guiding principle underpinning inclusion, that regular schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, sensory, emotional or other special needs (Forlin 2008:76). They should therefore have appropriate skills and as such the expectations on teachers are greater. This then affects attitudes towards IE, with research showing that differing attitudes of teachers may contribute to the effective implementation of IE.

2.8 TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

One of the most difficult challenges in preparing teachers to work in diverse

classrooms is that of ensuring that they have a positive attitude towards learners with different backgrounds and SEN, and that they are willing participants in the inclusion movement (Forlin 2010:165). This implies that if teachers do not have an understanding of diversity and positive attitude and belief in inclusion teachers cannot be expected to embrace such a philosophy.

Florian and Rouse (2010:190) maintain that most mainstream teachers do not believe that they have the skills or knowledge to teach learners with learning barriers because they have not taken a specialist course. Furthermore, they believe there are experts 'out there' to teach those learners on a one-to-one basis and therefore teaching them is not their responsibility. This type of thinking becomes a barrier to Inclusive Education, as developing effective inclusive practices is not only about extending teacher's knowledge but also encouraging them to do things differently and getting them to reconsider their attitudes and beliefs about children with barriers and schooling.

The concept 'attitude' implies a way of thinking, which determines a person's reaction towards persons, objects, institutions or issues in either a positive or negative way (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2002:41). Attitudes, apart from determining a person's reaction, also imply the tendencies to categorise based on a positive or a negative way (Sidogi 2001:37). Furthermore Bootzin et al. (1991:376) define attitude in psychological terms as an evaluative response to a particular object, idea, person or a group of people. They are often measured collectively, with individual preferences grouped together to give a broad picture of the views held by an individual or people. Traditionally, attitudes are considered to have three components, affective or emotional component (how we feel about the object), behavioural (how we act toward the object), and cognitive (our knowledge, beliefs and thoughts about the object).

Many attitude problems occur through human interaction in the school community, which includes relations between teachers, principal and teachers, teachers and learners, teachers and parents and between learners themselves. The relations between teachers are not only important in the context of developing a healthy working environment, but also as a model for learners themselves (Engelbrecht &

Green 2001:49). The researcher explores the attitude of teachers towards LSTs, and vice versa, with the aim of revealing misconceptions about LSTs and teachers.

For the purpose of this study, the attitudes of teachers and LSTs will be viewed according to the three components of attitudes, the researcher envisage to find out what kinds of attitudes do they hold towards their work, what motivates them to hold on to their jobs and their knowledge, beliefs and thoughts about their work. Concurrently the attitudes of teachers towards LSTs will be investigated so that one can find out their attitudes to LSTs, are they posing a threat to their posts or are they challenging their authority in class? Teachers' attitude is not a South African problem only; it is still a nightmare in some international countries. The next section will orientate the reader of the literature reviewed on this issue to better understand the South African context.

One of the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education is 'attitude' and that of the teacher is crucial to the promotion of inclusive education. The challenge facing many South African teachers is that they have not been trained to cope with diversity of learners now entering schools. Dr Gordon Porter, a reputed authority in the field of inclusive education, maintains that teachers need to be assisted to achieve positive changes in attitudes towards new teaching methods and circumstances in order to achieve effective inclusion schools (UNESCO 2000:3). Hence, the use of LSTs in Gauteng to support learners directly either in general classroom or on a pull-out basis, or indirectly by supporting teachers in their planning and delivery of the curriculum, requires a high level of teamwork, joint planning and collaboration. LSTs can guide teachers to achieve positive changes in attitudes towards new teaching methods and strategies in order to achieve effective inclusion.

The task of implementing education policies, including White Paper 6 is performed at provincial level then filters down to the districts or regions, thence to schools. This allows the opportunity for the provincial staff to design the implementation programme and strategies in context. Gauteng is one of the provinces with the task of implementing inclusive education policy by the utilisation of LSTs.

However, LSTs as part of the DBST have a task of addressing barriers by participating in the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) structure, and providing continuous support and capacity building for teachers, with support strategies to support learners by means of pull out systems. All stakeholders in the education system find themselves in a situation in which they are expected to provide an education system that is aligned with the Bill of Rights.

Teachers are the main role players in the school and are expected to provide quality education for all learners, irrespective of religion, HIV/AIDS status, disability, language, race, gender and belief. However studies in South Africa have shown that teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusion and moreover lack skills to implement inclusive education which LSTs do have. It is assumed that teachers have their own attitudes towards the LSTs and inclusive education.

It is then critical to recognise that inclusivity is complex, to be seen not only as an issue of placing learners with diverse needs and barriers into regular classes, but also as a model of holistic development of modifying and adapting community and teachers' attitude to enable all learners to fully engage with the curriculum. Forlin (2004b:186) asserts that inclusive education is not only a new paradigm that has its own language but actually challenges the traditional attitudes, beliefs and understanding of what inclusive education is about. Teachers pose their own attitudes, ideas and beliefs about what they consider to be right when it comes to inclusive practices. These ideas needs to be accredited and considered important, for if they are not well addressed then it is not possible to have an inclusive society that incorporates diversity in schools. LSTs will be unable to fulfil their task if the attitudes of teachers are not attended to.

Of particularly significance are the attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive educational practices, as they are considered as the most influential aspects of determining the success of inclusion. As teachers it is critical that opportunities are provided for reflection of their attitudes, personal beliefs, values and personal expectations, while developing the desire to become inclusive in order to seek out the skills. If teachers have the good will and positive attitudes then they will seek the skills to embrace diversity. LSTs will be useful in providing

continuous support of teachers and capacity building of teachers with support strategies to support learners in need of support.

There are many variables that can impact and impinge on a school's effectiveness in implementing inclusive education practices as they attempt to accommodate the diverse needs of learners to be considered in this process. These include attitudes of school staff, learners, parents, available support, and awareness and acceptance of people who are perceived to be different. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs and feelings play a very important role in the successful implementation of an inclusive education policy. It is evident that LSTs play a crucial role in the Foundation Phase to make sure that there is an effective implementation of inclusive education in Gauteng. However, the question remains as to what the teachers' attitudes are towards LSTs who visit their schools on a weekly basis to support the teachers with strategies to support learners. How do the teachers perceive them? Various countries reported differently on teacher's attitudes to inclusion.

In a recent study in Australia of community attitudes towards inclusive education, respondents stated that people felt uncomfortable when interacting with individuals with disabilities, emotional behaviour and communication disorders. It was believed that this was mainly due to their lack of knowledge and understanding of diverse needs of learning needs of individuals (Disability Services Queensland 2000:3). Only 17% of the sample reported that they knew many of the diverse types of disabilities or other learning challenges, while 20% said they knew very little or had no knowledge at all.

Of particular significance are the attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive education practices as they are considered to be the most influential aspects of determining the success of inclusion. It is critical for teachers to reflect on their beliefs and opportunities to engage with learners with diverse range of needs. Teachers need to identify their own personal beliefs, values and personal expectations while developing the desire to become inclusive in order for them to seek out the skills. If teachers have good will and positive attitudes they will seek out the skills to embrace diversity.

A study conducted in Northern Ireland on teachers' perceptions of inclusive teaching found that student teachers who had never been to teaching practice held positive attitudes to inclusion in spite of having a clear sense of the difficulties and challenges the implementation may hold, particularly within the context of sectarianism (Lambe & Bones 2006:181). This affirms the findings of the study conducted on the general education teachers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and their acceptance of the inclusion of students with disabilities. The study revealed that teachers in general in the UAE had less than encouraging attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities, which allows and encourages the establishment of policies that guarantee a student's right to be educated in regular classrooms. The above authors further affirm that if a country is aiming to change its education system and push for inclusion then the teachers' attitudes needs to change. In a study by Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly (2003:68), the findings suggest that accurate knowledge and positive but realistic expectations are important for enhancing the acceptance of individuals within schools and communities.

The practical implementation of inclusive education in developing countries such as Uganda and Zambia is hampered by insufficient teacher training, inadequate human and material resources, large class sizes and negative attitudes (Silupya 2003:61).

2.9 TEACHER ATTITUDES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Teachers are the people who make learning possible, so their own attitudes, beliefs and feelings with regard to the implementation of inclusive education are crucial. South African teachers are currently being expected to make major changes in the way they understand teaching and learning. Teachers may need support in order to be able to focus on the positive rather than the negative aspects of change (Engelbrecht 1999:10). Teachers need to be sensitive to their own attitudes and feelings about inclusion in order to be supportive.

In a number of studies in South Africa, the attitudes of teachers towards educating

learners with diverse challenges to learning have been put through as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive. Engelbrecht, Swart & Elloff (2001:259) focused on the coping skills of educators who had learners with Down's syndrome in inclusive classrooms. Their findings indicated that teachers experienced stress due to lack of support and inappropriate training for inclusive programmes. In a study conducted by Bothma, Gravett and Swart (2000:202) on the attitudes of primary school teachers towards inclusive education, they found that educators' beliefs and attitude towards the South African policy were negative. They also indicated that these beliefs and attitude could become a critical barrier to successful implementation of inclusive education policy.

Naicker (2003:1) asserts that although inclusion seems to be well researched and established in the developed world it should not be regarded as problem-free. Notably, children in the West who are in special education classes are there because of poverty, language and inappropriate education practices.

(Belknap, Roberts & Nyewe in Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht 1999:170) discuss what could be interpreted as samples of inclusive environments. They acknowledged that students with disabilities are likely to put higher demands on the teacher. Attitudes play an important role therefore, where needed, attitudes of those transmitting education should change from targeting a selected few to supporting all students. It is evident that attitudes and support cannot be separated, because if one has a negative attitude towards learners with barriers one cannot provide that support to the learners. In a similar vein, if one's attitude towards IE is negative then whatever effort is made to make inclusive education a reality will be shut down. If IE practices are promoted in schools, negative attitudes and perceptions will fade, perhaps much sooner than expected.

2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the Theoretical framework of Inclusive Education and defined IE in detail. It also highlighted an increased number of learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream schools, established through

the literature both in developing and developed countries. Teachers' attitudes in other countries, as well as in South Africa were also brought to the fore. In the next chapter the issue of support will be defined and discussed in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

SUPPORT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

“All children, youth and adults have the potential to learn within all bands of education and they all require support.” (DoE 2001: 24)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on the experiences of Foundation Phase Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) in supporting classroom teachers with the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in the Gauteng Province. This chapter provides definitions of support, learning support in inclusive settings, support in developed and developing countries, particularly in the South African context, the teachers' learning support system and learning needs. In this Chapter the various levels of support are discussed as explained by Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (See sections 1.8 and 2.2).

3.2 DEFINING SUPPORT

For the purpose of this study, support can be defined as all activities that increase the capacity of a school to respond to diversity. A supportive environment where there is collaboration amongst teachers, district officials, principals, parents and learner support teachers is key to successful implementation of IE. According to Calitz (2000:16), support may involve a group of colleagues who are available to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning, therefore educational support services need to be organised the roles of all players in the implementation of IE clearly defined.

3.3 LEARNING SUPPORT IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS

The concept of learning support acknowledges the potential of learners each to

grow at their own pace towards a maximum level of independence in learning. It can be achieved by using strategies, practicing learning styles and each reaching a level of achievement with their own unique abilities. It further relies on collaboration between the systems to which the learners belong, and their various forms of participation in the process of teaching and learning (Bouwer 2005:48). According to White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, DoE (2001a:16), learners at schools should be allowed to learn at their own pace and be provided with support where necessary. Such idealism, however, will require the employment of appropriate personnel to assist in addressing these issues. Focus now turns to LSTs and the skills required in fulfil the associated needs.

IE involves supporting learners with what they are unable to master or do at school on their own. Therefore, LSTs can assist teachers with strategies they can use to help learners deal with barriers, provided they have the relevant skills to do so. This is relevant to the study because it emphasises that learners do not develop in isolation but require an adult to assist them when they encounter difficulties. LSTs are deployed at schools to support teachers in implementing IE in the Foundation Phase, using the appropriate intervention programmes, so that they can achieve the expected outcomes. This requires an interdependence of the learner and the social situation, placing responsibility on the teacher to establish an interactive instructional relationship with the learner. The policy of IE requires schools to respond to the diversity of their learners and provide equal opportunities for all to receive high quality education. Addressing barriers to learning and participation is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders involved in education, which should not be one-sided in any school system or the policy (Landsberg et al. 2005:48). Rather, it requires support to focus on the learning and teaching process, by identifying and addressing learner, LST, classroom teacher and educational needs. However, although a major responsibility for coordination of support may rest with a limited number of people, all staff are involved in support activities (DoE 2005a:23).

In recent literature and discourse on IE, there has been frequent use of the term 'support', reflecting that one cannot claim to practice it without supporting or being supported, or collaborating with stakeholders. Even though they are acting as

consultants for learners experiencing barriers to learning, they lack support from the schools and the system. This view is based on the researcher's experience as an inclusion specialist. Provision of a support system is the key to progress (Mittler 2000:121), with LSTs being a valuable asset.

The concept of learning support acknowledges the potential of learners each to develop at their own pace towards a maximum level of independence in their learning. This can be achieved by using strategies and practicing learning styles of choice, each reaching a level of achievement in accordance with his or her unique abilities. It further relies on collaboration of people from the systems to which the learner belongs, to participate in the process of learning (Landsberg et al. 2005:48). As well as all the systems working together, changes in terminology used before inclusion should also be considered if the vision of inclusion is to be realised.

To facilitate the change to inclusion, the terminology must reflect the vision and contribute to its realisation. For example, 'learning support' is a preferred term to 'remedial education' in that the remedial education conventionally adheres to the medical deficit model of diagnosis and treatment, whilst learning support follows the principles of the social systems model. A refocusing away from the "specialness" of learners and the special form of provisions, needed for the removal of stumbling blocks within society, has given further impetus to the use of the term 'learning support' (Swart & Pettipher 2005:6-9).

White Paper 6 (DoE 2001a:28) affirms that all children and youth can learn, but also require support. Learning support is usually seen as support for learners, but in order to understand the kind of support it is important to examine the experiences of LSTs as they work with classroom teachers. For the purpose of this study, support in inclusive settings can be understood as a range of measures and provisions that assist teachers in responding to the needs of learners with disabilities and learning needs in schools. Ladbrook (2009:50) maintains that inclusive education system in South Africa is still in its infancy stage, with schools only slowly responding to IE and finding answers to emerging and unique needs.

Learning support can also be defined as all activities that increase the capacity of a school to respond to diversity (CSIE 2000:11). Support involves not only having a special needs teacher to provide remedial support for special needs learners, but also changing the culture of the school, policies and practice that enable all the learners to succeed. Walton (2006:103) asserted that support as a concept could perpetuate a mainstreaming or a medical model, that is, that some learners are somehow deficient and need to be supported to achieve inflexible curriculum demands, and that attempts to accommodate learners with diverse learning needs by adapting or modifying the classroom practices can be criticised in the same way. The researcher does not agree with Walton's view, because the successful effective implementation of IE depends on how support is organised. If LSTs are given the relevant support by either the districts or the schools they can be a valuable resource to the classroom teachers in the Foundation Phase, as they possess relevant skills of teaching learners experiencing learning problems.

Learners experiencing barriers to learning can be viewed by the whole school community as playing an important role in the changing education system, as they point out that there is a need for curriculum reform and the revision of teaching and learning. According to Calitz (2000:16), learning support involves a group of colleagues who are available to assist the learners experiencing barriers to learning. Educational support services therefore need to be organised, and the roles of all players in the implementation of IE clearly defined.

Support is seen as focusing on deficits and their diagnosis and therefore in the past remedial education teachers were used to assist learners who were identified as having barriers to learning. A remedial education teacher was a trained specialist in the field, whose task was to help learners overcome their learning difficulties by providing suitable intervention and support. In so doing, he or she would help to correct or improve deficient skills in learners, enabling them to "fit into" the mainstream. A remedial teacher was responsible for identifying learners experiencing specific learning disabilities and working with them, most often individually and on a withdrawal basis, to remediate their difficulties and to maximise the actualisation of their potential. The remediation system tended to be individualistic, based on a medical model, and the services offered were rather

fragmented and inadequate (Naidu 2007:5).

A learner in need of remediation in the current approach of IE is provided with support that is seen as part of everyday experience. Putting IE, policy into practice requires many substantial changes and developments in the system, society, schools and support services. Support must therefore be organised in such a way that a range of barriers to accessing the curriculum are uncovered and addressed (DoE 2001b:20). Classroom teachers provide support as part of their day-to-day practice, including ensuring that all learners take part in the lesson, that they have opportunities to interact with the teacher and other learners, and that they achieve success. The concept of support should not therefore be used to devalue or de-skill existing good practice (Mittler 2000:121). Developed countries can also learn from the strategies that are used in developing countries.

3.3.1 Developed Countries

The unavailability of support for teachers in an inclusive setting is not a South African problem only, but internationally countries are also experiencing difficulties in making sure that learners and teachers are supported in inclusive settings. Support for learners with special needs in Australia, for instance, is based on the need for equitable educational opportunities that allow students to achieve their full potential. Support is categorised by two main approaches, i.e., the support provided for learners with specific disabilities (intellectual, physical, autistic spectrum disorder, vision, hearing and speech or language) and support for those who have learning difficulties or learning disabilities (Forlin 2001:123). This involves mobilising all stakeholders to take part in the process, if the inclusion vision is to be realised.

Most countries have ensured that relevant provision is made to support both learners and teachers in IE. For instance, in the USA, teacher assistants provide personal attention to students with other special needs, such as those who speak English as a second language or those who need remedial education. Their experiences show a lack of clarity about the role of the support teacher in many schools, and unwillingness of mainstream teachers to accept responsibility for

special needs students (Occupational Outlook Handbook 2008:15).

With the movement toward more inclusive schooling in most countries, support should be a systematic, integrated and part of general education provision to all. In Canada the policies of interagency collaboration, focussing on child development dependent on both home and school factors, have been developed (Adler & Gardner 1994:35). The emphasis here is to integrate the academic, social, moral, emotional development of children, which requires that the home, school and community share a common focus on education and caring.

In most countries teachers have some form of support to assist them in the implementation of IE, though the support and practice will differ according to context. There is some sort of support that is offered to teachers to implement IE but teachers have different views and experiences of it. It is illogical to make a comparison between international countries and South Africa because the practices and the context are very different, however many lessons can be learnt about the practices of inclusion in countries such as Canada, where they use method and resource teachers in providing support to schools and educators (Porter 2008:65).

In Canada, method and resource teachers are primarily responsible for providing direct and effective support to classroom teachers. They feel they do not have enough time to do everything required, that is programme planning, materials preparation and completing paperwork associated with an individual education plan. Moreover, learners do not learn the same information in the same way or at the same time (Porter 2008:66). Canada thus faces similar challenges to those in South Africa.

Some developed countries have a school-based pre-referral assistance team, comprising a group of teachers from the same school who meet regularly to discuss the progress of students that other teachers in the school have brought to their attention. This team is designed to help teachers make classroom accommodations that maximise opportunities for students to succeed and might make referral for special education. Such teams provide a forum where teachers

can meet and participate in collaborative, problem-solving process. Their goals are to reduce the need for referral to special education, accommodate students with behavioural and academic needs, and provide suggestions for the classroom teacher (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm 2003:21). It is clear that developed countries such as Australia, the USA and Canada are still facing some challenges in the implementation of IE.

3.3.2 Developing Countries

Amongst African countries, Uganda and Zambia have made progress towards inclusion through enacting legislation (Arbeiter & Hartley 2002:63; EENET 2003:55). In a study conducted in Uganda on teachers' and pupils' experiences of integrated education, it was suggested that provision of better resources to schools and to teachers, and improved networking to provide effective support services to schools, would benefit all children. The practical implementation of IE is often hampered by insufficient teacher training, inadequate human and material resources, large class sizes and negative attitudes.

African countries were quick to adopt policies without adequate preparations for the programme. According to Mutepfa, Mpofu and Chataika (2004:54), in Zimbabwe, successful implementation of IE is yet to be a common reality, due to lack of commitment by policymakers towards learners with disabilities. It seems that despite African countries having put some policies in place for the implementation of IE there is a lack of commitment to put them into practice.

South Africa has some support strategies in place to support teachers in the Foundation Phase, but with reference to the implementation of IE the question arises as to which should be utilised for IE to be effective. The policy on learners who experience barriers to learning (WP6) accords with modern international trends and specifies that these learners should be accommodated within the general education system and supported in an integrated, community-based manner. The main aim of this is to enable all learners to value, have access to and succeed in lifelong education of good quality (Landsberg et al. 2005:63).

Vogel (2003:114) supports the notion in the WP6 that the development of education and training must be premised on an understanding that:

- All children, youth and adults have a potential to learn within all bands of education and they all require support.
- Many learners experience barriers to learning or drop out of school primarily because of the inability of the system to recognize and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs.
- Establishing inclusive and training systems will require changes to mainstream education so that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be identified early and receive appropriate support. (DoE 2001:24).

This requires that classroom teachers have the skills to identify those learners and support them.

There is general observable behaviour that can give the teacher an indication that learners are not coping and need support, for example, if the learner:

- is very dependent on the teacher or others to start an activity
- not confident
- does not finish work
- disturbs others
- does not take part in activities
- cannot sit still
- cries easily and often
- cannot easily make the transition from one activity to the other
- easily becomes confused (ETH306W Only study guide 2004:104).

The researcher is of the opinion that although these are some of the forms of behaviour the teachers can observe, they are not exclusive, but rather an indication of underlying barriers. Teachers should strive to find out the cause of behaviour, and find more effective ways of overcoming the barriers, with schools developing an enabling environment for all learners (Engelbrecht & Green 2001:147).

For the abovementioned reasons, the importance of the Learning Support Teachers in schools cannot be underestimated. They cover areas which the ISS unit cannot, and support the teachers in the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase. Although it is documented that lack of teacher support impacts on the effective implementation of IE, utilisation of Learning Support Teachers is one form of assisting the process. The researcher argues that the LSTs are not supported enough during the execution of their tasks in terms of guidance, resources and emotion.

Although Wasielewski (2004:43) believes that South Africa's education policies were in line with international trends in terms of the approach to IE, educational support services remain under-resourced and unable to deal with the large number of learners in need. The educational support personnel are also frustrated by their inability to assist the learners and teachers (Vogel 2003:115). Learners are educated in inclusive settings where there is no support, but if LSTs can be utilised effectively it will benefit the learners and classroom teachers. It will also reduce the level of stress experienced by education support staff.

The WP6 emphasises the strengthening of education support services, with focus on the development of DBSTs, institution-level support teams and special schools as part of the teams. Hay (2003:230) asserted that no longer do only certain learners require support. An education support service within IE has to plan to help all learners and staff. It is evident that the DoE is also dedicated to ensure that the support for teachers and learners is provided at schools, hence the use of LSTs.

Schools can have effective support by mobilising the resources that already exist in and around the premises. By utilising these resources, decisions about what kind of support is needed, can be requested. In this study schools will have to utilise the expertise of the LSTs in order to fill this gap and to assist learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. No two learners experience the same barriers, therefore support cannot be offered on a uniform basis and working with learners on an individual basis is vital.

Studies have documented the benefits of collaboration between the home and the school, but in South Africa particularly the district where this research was conducted, there is no evidence of collaboration between teachers and LSTs. Yssel, Engelbrecht, Oswald, Eloff and Swart (2008:24) maintain that the benefits of collaboration include higher grades, positive attitudes and improved behaviour, more successful programmes and successful schools. The basic goal of IE will not be realised if the necessary support is not supplied to teachers and learners. The goals of IE can be achieved if the teachers and learners are given sufficient support.

Stainback and Stainback (2000) wrote that a range of forms of support are needed for teachers and learners to reach several goals, including:

- Meeting the unique educational objectives of education and curriculum and instructional needs of all children within inclusive general education classes.
- Helping all students feel welcome and secure in the educational mainstream through development of friendships and/or peer support.
- Challenging each student to go as fast and far as possible in fulfilling his or her unique potential.
- Developing and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere conducive to learning for all the students.
- Arranging the physical and organisational characteristics of the classroom to accommodate the unique needs of each student.
- Providing every student any ancillary services he or she might need.

Previously, support for learners was a responsibility of specialised individuals who were trained especially to perform that duty. Learners experiencing barriers to learning were identified and referred to the education support services for assistance. Teachers did not see it as their responsibility to help these learners because they claimed they were not trained to do so. In IE, teachers are supposed to adapt the environment, their attitudes, and the curriculum and teaching methods in such a way that external and internal barriers are minimised.

The supportive approach focuses on providing education support services to schools, staff, parents, caregivers and learners (Donald et al. 2010:23). There is a movement towards broadening the focus of support beyond individual learners, but this is only possible if there are specialists responsible for supporting learners experiencing learning problems at their particular schools or having teachers who are well equipped to teach them. The WP6 proposes that a systemic approach to support the assessment of individuals and the development of preventative and intervention programmes in inclusive classrooms are necessary to respond appropriately to the needs of all learners. The White Paper further claims that in strengthening education support services, DBSTs should comprise staff from provincial, district and regional offices as well as from existing special schools (DoE 2001a:28). The primary function of these DBSTs will be to assess programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. They would build the capacity of schools to recognise and address severe learning difficulties and accommodate a range of learning needs through supporting teaching, learning and management. LSTs together with the Inclusion and ISS are thus being deployed.

It will be unfair to emphasise support without mentioning collaboration, because inclusion is not an individual enterprise but rather a team effort. For the purpose of the study, teachers, DBSTs, ILSTs, LSTs, parents and other stakeholders working together is not a luxury but a necessity.

3.4 LEVELS OF SUPPORT IN THE SYSTEM

The study focuses on factors that influence the utilisation of LSTs at four levels, namely macro, exo, meso, and micro. This relates strongly to the levels as explained in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. As stated above, for the purpose of this study the macro- relates to the DoE, the exo- to the provincial level, the meso- to the district and the micro- to the schools.

LSTs are presently supporting Foundation Phase teachers in implementing IE in Gauteng. The recommendation made by the DoE in South Africa is that the

education and training system:

... should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning. That would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop, extend their potential and participate as equal members of the society (DoE 2001a:5).

It is evident that the DoE is committed to supporting learners in schools and by so doing barriers to learning can be reduced. In South Africa, the education support system includes the following levels of support:

Table 3.1: Levels of support in South African context (DoE 2002f:10)

| Level of Support | Key Support Functions |
|---|---|
| National Department of Education (macro-level). | Providing EWP6 and a broad management framework for support. |
| Provincial departments in the nine provinces (exo-level). | Coordinating implementation of national framework of support, in relation to provincial needs. |
| District-based support teams (including special / resource schools) (developed within smaller geographical areas, determined in different ways in the nine provinces) (meso-level). | Providing integrated support to education institutions. (ECD, schools, colleges, and adult learning centres) to support the development of effective teaching and learning. |
| Institution-level support teams (local teams in schools, colleges, early childhood and adult learning centres). (Micro-level). | Identifying and addressing barriers to learning in the local context, thereby promoting effective teaching and learning. |

These levels relate to Bronfenbrenner's model in which the interconnectedness of

the systems to make up a whole (see Section 2.2). The Ministry of Education determines the policy on transformation and changes in education for the whole country and puts it into legislation. The DoE, with its advisory bodies, must decide how education should be organised, and how it should function with other government departments. They must also delegate responsibilities and make job descriptions. They then give guidelines to the provinces in this regard (ETH306W Only study guide 2004:100), and prioritise improvement of support and capacity of the education and training system in order to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning. The levels of support can be interpreted in relation to Bronfenbrenner's model, to show how the systems should support each other.

3.4.1 Support at national level

The national DoE is responsible for formulating policy and providing guidelines on how the provinces should implement the policy. For the purpose of this study, this level of education can be regarded as the macro-system, because at this level decisions are made on policymaking. Bronfenbrenner's model comprises layers or levels of interacting systems that result in change, growth and development, such as physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural. What occurs in one system affects and is affected by other systems (Landsberg et al. 2005:10), such that human behaviour, experience and actions cannot be understood if the contexts in which they occur are not considered. An ecological perspective therefore acknowledges that the environment plays a pertinent role in the functioning and the development of a human being. In this context (South African) the national DoE oversees nine provincial departments and the decisions that are made at this level may have an impact on or be influenced by all the systems.

3.4.2 Support at provincial level

The provinces implement policy according to their provincial needs, as accepted by the DoE, in this study referred to as the exo-system, because the learner is not directly involved as an active participant. However, decisions made at this level

may influence or be influenced by what happens in this setting, thus placing a learner at risk of experiencing barriers to learning. The nine provinces have responsibility for implementing policy as accepted by the DoE. Landsberg et al. (2005:63) maintain that the provinces are not at the same level regarding the implementation of the policy of IE as resources and manpower differ from province to province. This means that the way learning support is organised will differ according to context. The way in which particular provinces and districts provide support depends on identified local needs and available resources (DoE 2002f:10)

In each of the nine provinces, Gauteng, Limpopo, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Kwa Zulu -Natal, Mpumalanga, Free State and North West, the policy on IE is being implemented and interpreted differently, according to provincial needs, and these will be discussed below.

A Literacy and Numeracy Strategy of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED 2006 on line) was a pilot project with 510 teacher assistants (TAs) deployed in 160 schools. The criteria for allocating TAs included schools in disadvantaged areas, in nodal development zones, and in poor areas where they were not learning in their home languages, and schools that were actively helping learners with learning difficulties (WCED, 2006:1). Reports indicated that teaching assistants were making a difference, and learners who were unable to write their names at the beginning of the project could now do so.

In the Free State, 100 teacher assistants and 20 teacher assistants were employed in 2006 to strengthen Special Schools (FSDoE on line), carrying out similar functions to TAS in the Western Cape, in the Free State (DoE Vacancy Circular 85 of 2006:2) approximately R6 million was dedicated to the employment of counsellors' and LTSs (responsible for learners with learning difficulties) and teacher assistants.

In KwaZulu-Natal, TAs are helping to increase access to education for young people who have barriers to learning (KZNeducation, on line) while the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) employed a similar strategy but using LSTs for effective implementation of IE According to circular 67 of 1996 the GDE, in order

to align itself to the national DoE with respect to aid or remedial classes, allowances were proposed for a pool of LST posts across the province, allocated to schools at the discretion of the District Manager, where learners cannot read or write and there are many behavioural problems.

However, despite these efforts, LSTs are still encountering problems with regard to supporting classroom teachers implementing IE with little done to address the problem. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to extend the limited research in this area. The Gauteng province is made up of three Metropolitan districts, namely Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane, but the research focused on one district in Gauteng.

This Gauteng district has been making use of LSTs to assist classroom teachers in the implementation of inclusive education in the Foundation Phase since 2006, when they were redeployed in accordance with the WP6 (DoE 2001a:39), which stated that they would not be based at each school because the numbers of learners experiencing barriers were small. As a consequence, LSTs are serving several schools each, which involve them, moving to and from different schools on different days rather than focusing on a single school.

Nor are the necessary structures for their roles in place, and they themselves finance travelling expenses, thus impacting on sustained service delivery. There is no legislation legitimising their new role, and such service is only in effect in certain districts (Ladbrook 2009:52). Clarification on their roles or responsibilities is non-existent so the various provinces employ different strategies in making sure that the vision of inclusion is realised.

LSTs are the most valuable yet scarce resource, and should be appreciated for assisting the teacher and learners in an otherwise slow implementation of the policy. As Porter and Stone (1998:230) wrote, teachers need to be assisted to achieve positive changes in attitude towards new teaching methods and circumstances if they are to achieve effective inclusion in schools.

3.4.3 Support at district level

The districts implement the policy according to their different needs, and are in turn divided into smaller geographical areas. At this level the experiences of the LSTs in relation to the district will be the main point of focus, corresponding to Bronfenbrenner's meso-system. The DBST manages support for the curriculum, including IE at the district level, and is the channel through which support should be provided.

The White Paper 6 (DoE 2001a:47) maintains that the education support services will be strengthened and will have at their centre the DBST, which is the core provider of support at district level. Members of this team are personnel currently employed at a district, regional or provincial level, including psychologists, therapists, remedial and LSTs, special needs specialists and other health and welfare professionals (DoE 2005a:16). The main focus is on indirect support to learners through assisting teachers and the school management. Support is provided on issues of curriculum and institutional development to ensure that the teaching and learning framework is responsive to the full range of learning needs. Where necessary they provide direct learning support to learners when and where the ILST is unable to respond.

The DBST provides a coordinated professional support service to the schools, ILST, teachers and learners (DoE 2001a:28). At this meso-level the schools rely on support from the districts in providing them with guidelines to implement IE. The researcher is interested in the kind of support for the districts that can enhance the execution of tasks for the LSTs. In selected districts, such as the one studied, LSTs are providing support to the schools. It is clear the way support and assistance is given to learners experiencing barriers to learning, which is in accordance with the principles of inclusion as stated in the policy. The researcher argues that the inclusive education system needs to be organised so that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and teachers.

In the South African context, DBST refers to an integrated professional support service at district level by support providers employed by the DoE who draw

expertise education institution and various community resources in their area (DoE 2001a:45). Their key function is to assist the education institution (including early childhood centres, schools, further education colleges, and adult learning centres) to identify and address barriers to learning to promote effective teaching and learning in local education institutions.

The core education support service providers at district level include the following:

- Support personnel currently employed by the DoE, such as therapists, psychologists, LSTs, experts on specific disabilities as well as other health professionals (medical doctors and social workers).
- General learning support facilitators, to identify particular learning needs and develop responsive learning programmes.
- Specialist learning support facilitators, to provide expertise on particular special needs (Landsberg et al. 2005:63)

The policy on inclusive education claims that providing support in the classroom will enable each learner to feel that he or she is an important part of the whole group. Learners should not feel that they are discriminated against because of their disability or learning barrier. Teachers must find more effective ways of overcoming these barriers, and schools should develop an enabling environment for all learners (Engelbrecht & Green 2001:147). To do this they should be familiar with the learning needs that can occur in the system. Focus now turns to LSTs and the skills required fulfilling these needs.

3.4.3.1 *The Learning Support Teachers system*

Learners who are identified as having barriers to learning are sent by schools to the LST (Ladbrook 2009:14), who then provides support by way of designing individual programmes or individual education plans (IEPs) to suit the needs of the learners. In order to conceptualise the practices and the functions of LSTs, it is important to understand what kinds of learning needs exist in the system, to be discussed below. In the South African context, the LST system can be defined as one that supports learners experiencing barriers to learning and development, and

also assist Foundation Phase teachers with teaching and assessment strategies. LSTs were employed by selected districts in Gauteng, and learners identified as having barriers to learning referred to the LST by the school.

The LST is a relatively new post, first created in selected Gauteng Districts in 2004, in an effort to implement the policy as outlined by EWP6. It is a school-based and a district dispensation post (Ladbrook 2009:14), defined by GDE (2004:3) as a qualified teacher with the relevant experience and expertise in the field of special needs and remedial education, with an inclusive education background. The role of the LSTs is to address barriers by participating in the ILST structure, and providing continuous support of teachers and capacity building of teachers on strategies for supporting learners.

In South Africa, efforts have been made to address the challenges of lack of education support personnel. For example, in an attempt to align current practice of inclusion, recommendations were made in WP6 for qualitative transformation of remedial or aid classes (GDE 2004:3). There were steps to be followed for the conversion of the remedial classes, which resulted in most special, remedial and aid classes being converted into learning support services. This meant that the teacher would not be attached to a permanent class, but rather he or she would have to provide learning support for all in the school. The main focus of such learning support service was to provide support to teachers in all areas, namely curriculum adaptation, assessment adaptation, learning material development and advice on how to identify and minimise barriers to learning and development (GDE 2004:4). Different provinces in South Africa adopted various strategies to support teachers in implementing IE.

Gauteng is using LSTs in selected districts, one being the district in which the study was conducted. However, although it is evident that the LSTs play a crucial role in the district, there are gaps in the structure. The ISS unit, which is one part of the E-Learning and Curriculum Support Services, is mainly focusing on the implementation of IE and Psychological Services, with only a few staff responsible for 186 schools during the time of the study, hence the use of LSTs to assist the ISS staff in the implementation of IE. This unit caters for the Foundation Phase,

intermediate phase, senior and further education and training. The ISS unit, which forms part of the DBST, also provides support to the ILST by way of assisting educators to be flexible in their teaching methods, as well as providing learning support where necessary. The main roles of the ISS unit will be to assist teachers to identify learners with barriers, those who require assessment, and those who experience barriers to learning and development. Based on the researcher's experiences as an inclusive education specialist, it also deals with educator development and referral to special schools.

Resources, whether human or otherwise, coupled with expertise, must be available within schools. Researchers already found in the 1990s that under-qualified teachers, under-resourced schools, an inflexible curriculum and the exclusion of certain learners in the mainstream schools played a role in learners not benefiting from the learning process. It is evident that such failures in the system remain a contributory factor to the effectiveness of inclusive education. In a school that serves a diverse learner population, human and material resources are harnessed to support all learners, in particular those who experience barriers to learning (Walton 2006:103). The DoE's vision concerning the use of LSTs requires systems to be put in place that identify and address the needs of the learners, the teachers and institutions.

LSTs are rendering support to the schools in the district, mostly in the Foundation Phase, but it is evident that more support is necessary, considering a Gauteng Minister of Education's call to return retired teachers to the system: "Foundation phase teachers will help existing overburdened and struggling teachers in their classrooms" (Saturday Star 2010:11). She further pointed out that learner and teacher discipline, poverty and infrastructural problems as factors underpinning the problems at school level, while acknowledging the quality of teaching and assessment "is not optimal".

However, the researcher argues that calling on retired teachers would not save the situation, as most taught in the apartheid era, when the learners were subservient and respectful, and exposed to a different type of life, unlike the current situation. Learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and

development are now affected by poverty and violence, with some orphaned and undisciplined. The key is to provide training on what kind of learners they will deal with when they return to schools. On the other hand, the retired teachers' skills and expertise may be beneficial to learners who are unable to read or write. Reading, writing and numeracy skills are the most fundamental in the Foundation Phase, the mastery of which will reduce the number of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. It will also reduce the stress on teachers.

Research has shown that many of the recommendations teachers receive from education support services personnel do not work in the classrooms because they are not sufficiently aware of the classroom context or dynamics. Teachers generally believe that no one is in a better position to understand the learner than the classroom teachers themselves (Giangreco & Doyle 2007:26). On the other hand, LSTs have worked in schools and therefore are familiar with the classroom context and the dynamics. They were teaching at schools before they were employed as LSTs in 2006, so they should be better qualified to render support to both teachers and learners.

The researcher argues that if teachers do not have the skills and expertise to accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning it would mean they need to be supported by experts in inclusive practices, such as LSTs. To understand support in inclusive settings it is important to look at the trends in some developed and developing countries as their policies on IE are in a more advanced stage than inclusive policies in South Africa. While the researcher acknowledges that different learning needs exist among learners, there are factors within the system which are of interest because if they are not properly addressed the LSTs will still face the challenges they are facing now, which in turn will affect the learners.

3.4.4 Support at schools

All the stakeholders should know what their roles are and what is expected of them by the policy. According to WP6 (2001a:29), every school should establish an ILST, the primary function of which would be to put in place properly

coordinated learner and teacher support services, notably identifying and addressing learner, teacher and institutional needs (DoE 2002c:46). Classroom teachers at schools are required first to identify and deal with the learners' problems first, then, if they persist, the learner should be referred to the ILST. The level then relates to Bronfenbrenner's micro-system as it refers to the immediate environments in which an individual develops, and because it is the immediate environment in which proximal processes, the interaction between the individual and the immediate environment, occur. It is at this level that the LSTs come directly into contact with the learners experiencing barriers to learning and teachers who need their support. The LSTs support the teachers via the ILST, which refers the identified learners to them. The team supports the teaching and learning process by identifying and addressing learner, teacher and institutional needs, gathering information and organising information sessions on inclusion as well as establishing partnerships with parents and community-based services.

Sethosa (2001:10) acknowledges that the ILST is made up of a team of teachers whose focus and functions are to develop and empower colleagues in identification of learning difficulties, intervention and preventative strategies, if at all possible. There is a need for teachers to collaborate in order to share expertise, knowledge and skills. An inclusive setting is a multi-faceted task that can be accomplished not by an individual but by a team.

The ILST is a quick, systematic and effective way in which teachers help to identify issues in education that need to be addressed as they emerge. The ILST develops an action plan to address these issues by implementing concrete steps. The ILST can be seen as:

- A forum for professional teachers to share, manage and solve problems, which arise from teacher, learner and immediate classroom concerns and needs.
- The team helps the teacher to define the problems at hand, consider possible alternatives and try out practical strategies.
- A facility for teachers to exchange ideas, feelings, thoughts and work on problem solving issues relating to the daily teaching experiences with

learners.

- A structured approach to collaborative problem solving with an emphasis on finding solutions that lead to follow-up interview and review.
- It is an effective way to link teachers together, build teamwork, promote teacher confidence and peer support, and generates new and effective ideas in education (DoE, 2001b:39).

After teachers have identified learners with different learning needs, they should intervene to help them achieve their potential and succeed. If learners are still experiencing problems they are referred to the ILST for further intervention. If the problem persists they will be referred to the DBST and the LSTs for further intervention and support (based on the researcher's experience as an inclusive education specialist). Landsberg et al. (2005:48) has argued that addressing barriers to learning and participation is a shared responsibility that cannot possibly be carried out one-sidedly by any school system or policy, hence the utilisation of LSTs in schools to assist those learners.

In Gauteng, LSTs are employed to support learning and participation of all learners. LSTs are perceived to be people who make possible teaching learners with barriers, but the system which regulates their practices is fragmented. This brings the researcher to the assumption that their morale is deteriorating. The study assumes that their roles are not clearly defined by the employer, in this case the GDE. The structures that are responsible for ensuring that inclusion is implemented effectively need to be organised so that the goals of IE can be a reality (based on the researcher's experience as an inclusive education specialist).

3.4.4.1 Mainstream schools

In terms of the DoE (1996), a public school may be mainstream and accommodate learners with special educational needs (Section 12(3)). The local 'ordinary' school would be the one closest to where the learner lives DoE (2005b:9). A mainstream school refers to a school educating learners with diverse learning needs in regular classes. According to (Swart & Pettipher in Landsberg

et al. 2005:7) mainstreaming is the educational equivalent of the normalisation principle which suggest that people with disabilities have a right to life experiences that are the same as , or similar to, those of others in society.

3.4.4.2 Full service schools

Full service schools are mainstream schools that are 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 in an area for those who experience barriers to learning and provide the necessary support. In the initial implementation stages these full service will be models of institutional change that reflect effective inclusive cultures, policies and practices (DoE, 2005b:9).

3.4.4.3 Special Schools

Special schools are those equipped to deliver education to learners requiring high-intensive educational and other support either on a full-time or a part-time basis (DoE 2005b:9). It is highlighted in the WP6 (DoE 2001a:29) that special schools and settings will be converted into resource centres and integrated into districts support teams so that they can provide specialised professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbouring schools. This indicates that they will become support bases, together with the DBSTs, for full service and mainstream schools. These different levels of support within the DoE clearly show its commitment towards supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning.

3.5 LEARNING NEEDS IN AN INCLUSIVE SETTING

Different learning needs arise from a wide range of factors, including physical, mental, sensory, neurobiological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, and differences in intellectual ability, particular life experiences or socio-economic deprivation (DoE 2001a:7). According to Sidogi (2001:24) learners experience learning problems when they find it difficult to master those

learning tasks which most of the other learners can manage, manifested in all learning areas. The support provided to these learners will be different because they have different learning problems and they would not be assisted by using an umbrella strategy.

Research has shown that there are different problems that learners experience in classrooms, for example language of learning and teaching (LOLT), mild intellectual disabilities and emotional disturbance. Friend and Bursuck (2004:241) maintain that learners with learning disabilities achieve less than other learners because they have trouble with processing, organising and applying academic information. Learners with intellectual disabilities have, however, a difficulty in meeting academic needs and social demands of general academic classrooms. Others experience emotional disturbance wherein learners have an average intelligence but have problems in learning, primarily because of external or internal behavioural adjustment problems.

Sidogi (2001:24) maintains that one of the concepts associated with learning problems is underachievement, when a learner does not do as well as expected of someone with his or her intellectual ability. These are learners who try their best but because they lack certain mental abilities they cannot be expected to show good results. Disadvantaged learners are those whose education has fallen behind as a result of social, political or economic circumstances.

Learners with barriers to learning and development are those who experience learning difficulties which make it difficult or impossible for them to learn effectively, and such difficulties arise from a range of factors such as physical, psychosocial disturbances, cognitive differences, particular life experiences or socio-economic deprivation (DoE 1998:3). Classroom teachers are then left with the task of supporting and accommodating learners with these diverse needs so that they can reach their full potential. There are factors that can also disadvantage the learners to reach their full potential and disadvantage learners to access the education.

CSATDP (2005:45) unpacks barriers to learning and development on two levels,

viz., within the system (extrinsic barriers) and within the learner (intrinsic). The barriers to learning exist within the system of education, within the social system and within the learner. Learners may experience physical or psychological impairments, for example deafness or physical impairments. Some of the impairments are not usually easy to see, such as hardness of hearing and partial sightedness, but they can have a detrimental effect on the learners' progress at school.

There are also barriers in the system that can affect the learner such as:

- Stereotyping differences
- Inappropriate and inadequate support services
- Unsafe and inaccessible built environment
- Inappropriate language of learning and teaching (LOLT)
- An inflexible curriculum
- Inappropriate communication
- Inadequate policies and Legislation
- Non-recognition and non-involvement of parents
- Inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and teachers
- Overcrowded classrooms (CSATDP 2005:45).

It is worth mentioning that all the barriers to learning whether intrinsic or extrinsic can have a negative effect towards the implementation of Inclusive Education if they are not taken care of.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The literature review in this chapter provided an orientation to the issue of support in developed and developing countries. Learning needs and other barriers to learning were clarified in order for the researcher to explain the necessity of the LSTs system. In the researcher's opinion, LSTs should be valued, appreciated and appropriately utilised. The following chapter will focus on the research methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on the description and discussion of the research design and methodology used in collecting data on experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education in a Gauteng district. It describes the research process that informed this study and gives details of the choice of the research paradigms, approach, design and sampling of participants. The chapter also provides a detailed description of data collection processes, explaining how to issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research were attended. The research begins by describing the research paradigm, ontological and epistemological standpoint and methodological paradigm. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also discussed. The chapter concludes by explaining the importance of the study to the broader context.

4.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is a model or pattern, according to which the social scientists views the objects of research (Kuhn, in Mouton & Marais 1996:150). The purpose of research and how it will be conducted are all influenced by the researcher's paradigmatic beliefs. Paradigms as basic belief system are based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln 1994:107). Denzin and Lincoln (1998:200) define a paradigm as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deal with the ultimate first principles, and represent the world view that defines for its holder the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. Therefore, a research design or plan cannot be isolated from the researcher's paradigmatic perspective on the world of research. When defining a paradigmatic perspective as a researcher the interplay between the ontological, epistemological, the research question, meta-theoretical underpinnings and methodology becomes

prominent (Mason 2002:59). How we think the social world is constituted is our ontology and shapes how we think we can know about it. Conversely, the way we look, which is the epistemology and methods we use to search for that knowledge, is the methodological paradigm.

According to Kuhn in Hatch (2002:498), four research paradigms may be identified, based on the argument that schools of scientific thought reach paradigm status when they have generated answers to the following questions:

- What are the fundamental entities of which the universe is composed?
- How do these interact with each other and the senses?
- What questions can legitimately be asked about such entities and what techniques are employed in seeking solutions (Hatch, 2002:498).

Table 4.1: An illustration of different research paradigms (Hatch 2002:498).

| | Ontology nature of reality | Epistemology what can be known | Methodology how knowledge is gained | Product forms of knowledge produced |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Positivist | Reality is out there to be studied, captured and understood | How the world is really ordered, knower is distinct from the known. | Experiments, quasi-experiments, surveys, correlation studies | Facts, theories, laws and predictions |
| Post-positivist | Reality exist but is never apprehended | Approximation of reality, researcher is data collection. | Rigorously defined qualitative methods frequency counts, low level statistics | Generalisations, descriptions, patterns, grounded theory |
| Construc tivist | Multiple realities are constructed | Knowledge as a human construction, researcher and participant construct understandings | Naturalistic qualitative methods | Case studies, narratives, interpretations, reconstructions |
| Critical /feminist | The apprehended world makes a material difference in terms of race, gender and class | Knowledge as subjective and political. Researcher's values frame of enquiry. | Transformative inquiry | Value mediated critiques that challenge existing power structures and promote resistance. |

A paradigm encompasses three elements, the first of which is *ontology*, and raises the basic questions about the nature of reality. The second is *epistemology*, or poses the questions, how do we know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? The third is the *methodology*, which focuses on how we gain knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:185). The constructivist paradigm was appropriate and relevant to the study since assumptions identified in this work hold that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meaning of their experiences and that meaning is directed towards certain objects or things (Creswell 2003:8).

4.2.1 Social Constructivism

The terms constructivist, constructivism, interpretivist, and interpretivism are used interchangeably in literature, but their meanings are shaped by the intent of the users. Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:200). Constructivists believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge and knowing is not passive. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by the mind, and the authors emphasise the pluralistic and plastic character of reality. Reality is expressible in a variety of symbolic and language systems, making it pluralistic, to be shaped to fit purposeful acts of intentional human agents (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 236).

In this study, it is argued there are multiple realities as each individual's perceptions are important and valid, with one person's interpretation about an issue different from that of another. Furthermore, reality is mutually and socially constructed, and a diversity of interpretations can be made. In this research, each Learning Support Teacher (LST) is a knower, the knowledge of whom can therefore only be shared by exploring his or her views, meanings, experiences and actions.

Henning et al. (2004:20) argue that knowledge is not only constructed by observable phenomena but also by descriptions of people's intentions, beliefs,

values and reasons, meaning making and self-understanding. The researcher therefore has to look at different places and at different things to understand the phenomenon.

Researchers using this kind of epistemology ask what kind of things people do, how they do them, what purposes activities serve and what they mean to them. Researchers thus become interested in meanings, symbols, beliefs, ideas and feelings given or attached to objects or events, activities and others by participants in the setting (Bailey 2007:53). Qualitative researchers are also interpretative researchers because they analyse the text to look for the ways in which people make meaning in their lives and what kind of meaning they make.

Crotty (2003:9) identified several assumptions about constructivism:

- Meanings are constructed by human beings as they are engaged with the world they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that participants can express their views.
- Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives. All are born into a world of meaning bestowed by one's culture, and the interpretation made by qualitative researchers is shaped by their own experiences and backgrounds.
- The process of qualitative research is inductive, with the enquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field. The researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world.

Using constructivism helped the researcher to investigate the constructions or broad meanings about experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase, with reference to the implementation of IE. Furthermore, the researcher wished to become immersed in the social-context (school) and observe the experiences and actions of LSTs in the implementation of IE, so therefore explored their experiences and behaviour. Using 'social constructivism', the researcher acknowledged that the experiences of LSTs are socially constructed, not given.

When philosophers refer to epistemology, they take a particularly structured view, framing the study of knowledge around ontology (the study of what is there to be known), and methodology (the study of the methods by which we discover knowledge (Thomas 2007:247). The researcher thus focussed on what can be known about the implementation of IE, and how things really work in it.

Constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, developing subjective meaning of their experiences directed towards certain objects or things. They rely on the participants' views of the situation studied, and participants are then able to construct meaning of a situation, typically forged in discussions or interactions with others (Creswell 2003:8). In the view of Henning et al. (2004:20), knowledge is constructed not only from observable phenomena but also from description of people's intentions, values, beliefs and reasons, with meaning making a self-understanding entity. If this is the case, it is the responsibility of the researcher to look at different places and at different things in order to understand a phenomenon.

For Denzin and Lincoln (2000:197), constructivists believe the mind is active in the construction of knowledge, so the mind of a human being is not passive but actively constructs knowledge and ideas. The abovementioned authors argue that human beings do not construct their interpretations in isolation, but against the environment in which they are actively engaged. LSTs as human agents do not exist in isolation from their school environment, nor do teachers exist in isolation from learners. There is, rather, a relationship between teachers, principals, LSTs and the school environment.

Additionally, constructivists argue that people make the social world that is meaningful in their minds (Karacasulu & Uzgören 2007:32), which implies that social environment defines who one is and one's identity as a social being. According to social constructivism, norms and shared beliefs comprise actors' identities and interests, e.g., the way people conceive themselves in relation to others. In a school context, it means that the mutual beliefs between LSTs, classroom teachers and principals define who they are.

On the other hand, Guba and Lincoln (1994:110) see a limitation in the social constructivist research approach, and a researcher is unable to study individuals exclusively because they are members of a greater society. An individual cannot be isolated from the environment in which he or she lives, but the researcher can interpret an individual in conjunction within his or her environment. This means that LSTs cannot be isolated from the environment in which they work, that is the school in which they are implementing IE.

In the next section, the research approach used in this study and the reason for the choice of approach are described.

4.3 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

This study necessitates a qualitative research approach because many qualitative researchers operate under different ontological assumptions about the world. They do not assume that there is a single unitary reality apart from one's perceptions (Krauss 2005:758-770). Each person experiences the world differently. Qualitative research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that believes there is no objective reality, but rather multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest (Krauss 2005:760). This is because participants are not objects, but human beings who can speak and think for themselves and who can define things from their own points of view.

A qualitative approach will also allow the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of social realities and derive a comprehensive portrait of a range of human endeavours, interactions, situations and perceptions (Zollers, Ramanathan & Yu 1999:158). Furthermore, as Creswell (2008:38) argues, a qualitative study is an investigative process whereby the researcher gradually makes sense of social phenomena through contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object under study. In this case the researcher will be able to examine various factors that contribute to LSTs experiences of and in the implementation of IE in the Gauteng province.

Qualitative research studies phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to

understand people in terms of their own definitions of their worlds (Creswell 2000:42). The researcher entered the setting with an open mind, prepared to immerse in the complexity of the situation and interact with the LSTs. The researcher obtained a holistic picture of the phenomenon being studied, appropriate to understanding the experiences of LSTs on the implementation of IE. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to understand how LSTs make sense of their own lives, experiences and structures of the world, by physically going to the schools to interview them, analyse documents and record behaviour in its natural setting by way of observations.

Qualitative researchers prefer to study the world as it naturally occurs, without manipulating it. They view human behaviour as dynamic and changing and advocate in-depth research, over an extended timespan. Qualitative researchers collect data in the field or at the sites where participants experience the issues or problem under study (Creswell 2009:175). The research takes place in a natural setting and the researchers have face-to-face interaction with the participants over time. Qualitative research is more concerned with understanding social phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants, and this happens through the researcher's participation in the daily activities of those involved in the research, or through historical empathy with participants in past social events (White 2005:81).

McMillan and Shumacher (2001:396; 2010:320) assert that qualitative research is concerned with the understanding social phenomena from the participants' point of view, and data is¹ collected in a setting that is sensitive to people and places under study. The data analysis is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. Additionally the final report or presentation includes the voices of participants, reflectivity of the researcher and a complex description and interpretation of the problem. Qualitative research is linked with phenomenology and interpretivism, known for its depth of enquiry. In a qualitative study, the variables are usually not controlled because it is this freedom and natural development of action and

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

representation that it wishes to capture (Henning et al. 2004:3). The researcher often makes knowledge claims based primarily on a constructivist perspective that is socially and historically constructed, with the intent of developing a theory or a pattern (Creswell 2003:18). Additionally, researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their setting (Schumacher & Macmillan 2001:396). People's individual and social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions are analysed, in this research those of the LSTs are analysed.

Capturing the insider's perspective of actors in specific settings was the researchers' primary concern; therefore the LSTs' perspectives were gathered at the schools in which they were working. In a qualitative approach, the researcher is the main data collector, going to the site to collect data him/herself. To this end, the researcher interviewed, observed LSTs and analysed documents. Furthermore, prolonged engagement with the participants helped the researcher to understand the implementation of IE from their perspectives. Qualitative work is interested in inner states at the core of human activity, and subjective judgment needs to be made by the researcher. Consequently, the researcher strove for depth of understanding of each participant's situation.

A person working within a quantitative approach would criticise this approach as it does not have the ability to generalise the findings to the entire population. However, for this study, the main aim was not to generalise the findings to individuals, sites or places outside those under study (Creswell 2009:193), but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of how the LSTs experienced the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase, with reference to Gauteng.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is analogous to a plan or a map used in the process of finding solutions to the research problem (Merriam 1998:44), and foregrounds all the decisions made in undertaking the study (Fouchè in De Vos 2011:268). The designs used by qualitative researchers will differ, depending on the purpose of the study, the nature of the research question and the skills and resources

available to the researcher. In addition, each of the possible designs has its own procedures and perspectives, reflected in the research process selected. There are no fixed rules to follow, or step-by-step guides to qualitative research design, but rather the choices and actions of the researcher determine the strategy. Accordingly, the researcher created the strategy best suited for the research and designed the entire research project around it (Fouche in De Vos 2011:268).

In qualitative studies there are several designs that can be used. A case study seeks to understand one person or situation in great depth, while ethnography examines behaviour as it reflects the culture of a group. Phenomenology is used to study the experience from the participants' point of view, while grounded theory sees data collected in a natural setting. Content analysis identifies the specific characteristics of a body of material (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:144).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:106), phenomenology is based on a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experiences taken at face value. The aim of this study is to understand the experience of LSTs in the implementation of IE; therefore a phenomenological design is appropriate. By using the phenomenology as a design, the researcher was able to understand their point of view and their direct experiences of implementing IE in the Foundation Phase. This concurs with the view of Leedy and Ormrod (2005:144) that the purpose of phenomenological study is to understand experiences from a participant's point of view. For the purpose of this study a phenomenological research design was undertaken as LSTs' experiences were elicited and the researcher wished to generate guidelines that would regulate their practice, in particular their experiences in the Foundation Phase in the implementation of IE.

4.4.1 Phenomenology

There are many opinions about phenomenology. The European version is based on the ideas of philosophers such as Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Sartre. Edmund Husserl, the classical philosopher, was the founder of one of the major movements in philosophy, phenomenology, and believed that knowledge must be independent of its respective situations. On the other hand, Martin Heidegger emphasised the social world, in which persons are identified by their social roles. Jean-Paul Sartre stressed that consciousness is nothing in itself but radical freedom, the pure power of negation, which brings meaning to the world (Welton 2003:32). The North American version is more linked to sociology and draws from the ideas of Alfred Schultz, who wrote of how people make sense of the social world. This study is less concerned with revealing the essences of an experience and more with how people give meanings to their own experiences, and their interpretation of the social phenomenon. This resulted in the researchers' choice of phenomenological research design, since the study aims at discovering essential aspects of LSTs' experiences.

Phenomenology relates to understanding and interpreting the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives (Fouche in De Vos 2011:270), and a phenomenological study investigates people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation, asking the question 'what is it like to experience this particular phenomenon?' (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:139). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:24), phenomenology aims at transforming lived experiences into a description of essence, and allows for reflection and analysis. It may involve the researcher in lengthy interviews with the informants, on a direct face-to-face basis. The researcher thus entered the participants' 'life worlds' and, from being placed in their position, analysed the conversations and interactions with them.

This study is phenomenological in that it deals with the lived experiences of, and meanings attached by the LSTs to the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase. It seeks their interpretations, made against their personal paradigms of thinking and value systems. The constructivist paradigm upon which this

qualitative research is built assumes that reality as interpreted by individuals is multilayered, interactive and a shared social experience (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:396).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:106) assert that phenomenology is based on a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experiences taken at face value. In keeping with the aim of the study, namely to explore the experiences of LSTs in supporting teachers in the implementation of IE, it was necessary to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives, especially the direct experiences of supporting classroom teachers in implementing IE.

4.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Population refers to individuals who possess the same characteristics, while sampling refers to the elements in the population considered for inclusion in the study. A sample is studied in an effort to understand the population from which it was drawn (Strydom in De Vos 2002:192). During the time of the study, there were 216 LSTs in Gauteng Province (DoE, 2006:10), with 16 in the district in which it was conducted. The district was selected because it employed LSTs to be based in mainstream schools, to support learners who had reading, writing, and mathematics problems, but who could be remediated. From the researcher experiences as an Inclusive Education specialist, she concluded that most of the learners who had barriers to learning in the abovementioned areas or subjects showed an improvement, and the classroom teachers were mostly impressed by the work of the LSTs.

According to Best and Kahn (2006:248), purposeful sampling is a technique used to select certain persons, settings or events on the grounds that they can provide the information desired. The sample is useful in answering the questions raised by the researcher, which in qualitative research involves purposefully choosing participants or sites that best achieve this aim (Creswell 2003:185). Purposive sampling does not include accessible or convenient sampling, but incorporates

those from which the most can be learned and who would most accurately help the researcher to answer the research question (Silverman 2000:105).

In this study, purposeful sampling was applied to select participants who on the basis of experience had been in these positions since 2006, though the number who matched the selection criteria were only ten, of whom three were in the pilot study. Only seven of the LSTs who had been supporting teachers for a period of three years would form part of the study. Furthermore, only those LSTs who had a qualification in IE, and had been supporting teachers for the full three years in the Foundation Phase, were studied. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some features or a process in which he or she is interested (Silverman 2000:104). It was assumed that LSTs would yield the most relevant information about the topic under investigation.

Furthermore, classroom teachers who were receiving the support also formed part of the study, because they were also supported by the LSTs. Those who had been receiving support from LSTs for three years since 2006 were also interviewed so that the data could be validated. The principal of the schools in which the LSTs were working was also interviewed, the rationale behind this was the researchers' belief that for LSTs to function effectively at schools, the principals needed to acknowledge and support what they were doing in schools. Before real data collection begins it is important to conduct a pilot study, as one way the researcher can orientate her/himself to the project.

The researcher chose only participants who would be able to supply the requisite information, be prepared to participate in research and willing to share the information (Morse & Richards 2002:20). LSTs who were currently supporting teachers in implementing an IE in primary schools, specifically the Foundation Phase (Grade R- 3) were approached. The Foundation Phase was selected because it is regarded as the critical stage for promoting an interest in education and developing positive attitudes towards schooling. If the child fails at this stage, she or he may be affected in her or his whole schooling (Joshua 2006:10).

4.5.1 Pilot study

In qualitative research, the pilot study is usually informal and the few respondents possessing the same characteristics as those of the main investigation can be involved in the study, merely to ascertain certain trends. The purpose is to determine whether the relevant data can be obtained from the respondents (Royse in De Vos 2002:217). A pilot study was conducted at three schools, with three LSTs, principals and classroom teachers participating, which helped the researcher to make modifications with a view to quality interviewing during the main investigation, estimating the time and costs that may be involved, as well as pre-empting the problems that may arise during actual qualitative interviews (Janesick in Denzin & Lincoln 1994:213).

De Vos (2002:331) identifies four aspects of a pilot study:

1. *Reviewing the literature*: which involves making decisions on the place and role of a literature review in a qualitative study. To ensure this, literature was reviewed from developed to developing countries, including those in Africa, on the experiences of LSTs in the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase.
2. *Discussion with experts*: through interviewing experts and identifying possible themes for further investigation in order to do a valid literature review and verify the findings. The researcher held a discussion with the Learning Support coordinator in the district under study in order to identify possible themes for further investigation.
3. *Feasibility of the study*: this stresses the importance of undertaking a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the real situation to be investigated. The researcher already held an opinion on the openness of a group of respondents, their willingness to cooperate and the number likely to be involved before saturation of data was achieved. Three LSTs, three principals and three classroom teachers, all of whom were willing to share their experiences on the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase, and who had been involved in the system for three years were interviewed, and

the main respondents in the study, the LSTs, were also observed and their documents pertaining to the support collected and analysed. The documents included the intervention strategies, assessment tools, timetables and registers for learners experiencing barriers to learning. Principals formed part of the study because it was assumed, without the support of management; the vision of IE would not be realised. In addition, it is important to include classroom teachers because they are the recipients of support offered by the LSTs. The researcher assumed that all the three parties mentioned above would yield the most relevant information to assist her in answering the research question.

4. *Testing the measuring instrument:* that is testing whether the instruments to be used are relevant for the purpose for which they are aimed. The researcher planned to conduct interviews, make observations and analyse documents, which helped her to test whether the measuring instruments would assist in acquiring the relevant data.

The pilot study yielded significant data, and it became evident that two of the questions were difficult for the participants and so would not be suitable to elicit rich data from them. These are the examples of the questions that were asked in the pilot study:

ORIGINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. *Is Inclusive Education implemented in your district?*
2. *Are Learning Support teachers supporting learners at schools?*
3. *What support do you need to implement Inclusive Education effectively?*
4. *What strategies could be used to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education?*
5. *Is there anything that was not asked but you want the researcher to know?*

During the main investigation, the first two questions asked in the pilot study were rephrased and shortened. It was necessary because the participants would be able to understand them and respond accordingly, as well as allowing the researcher to probe. Examples of the rephrased questions are as follows:

REPHRASED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. *What are your opinions about the implementation of Inclusive Education?*
2. *What is your role as a Learning Support Teacher in the Foundation phase?*
3. *What support do you need to implement Inclusive Education effectively?*
4. *What strategies could be used to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education?*
5. *Is there anything that was not asked but you want the researcher to know?*

Rephrased questions worked better and the participants were able to provide the researcher with the relevant answers. The same methods of data collection used in the pilot study were also used in the main research.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the vehicle with which researchers collect information to answer the research questions and defend conclusions and recommendations based on the findings from the research (Mertens in Mahlo 2006:31). The following data collection methods were used: interviews, observations and document analysis.

4.6.1 Interviews

Atkinson and Silverman (1997:143) point out that interviewing is among the most widespread methods of collecting data in the social sciences. Semi-structured interviews are used for data collection, as useful tools for providing firsthand information from the LSTs. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:107), semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with the opportunity to ask individually tailored questions and do not limit the field of enquiry. Semi-structured interviews begin with a predetermined set of questions but allow some latitude in the breadth of relevance.

Individual interviews aim to have something of 'the best of both worlds' by establishing core issues to be covered, whilst at the same time leaving the

sequence of relevance of the interviewee free to vary, around and out from that core. According to Myburgh and Strauss (2000:26), interviewers aim to gather information from the respondents' lived experiences. In-depth, face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to gather the information about the experiences of LSTs in supporting teachers in the implementation of IE. One-to-one interviews not exceeding one hour were conducted after working hours until data saturation was reached. They were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:355), in-depth interviews use open response questions to obtain data on participants' meanings, which is how individuals conceive their world and how they explain or make sense of the important events in their life. In-depth interviews are extensive, and allow for probing. Interviews were used as they afforded LSTs the opportunity to discuss their experiences in classroom practices and share their opinions about the manner in which they experienced the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng.

According to Bailey (2007:101), the choice of paradigm, tradition of enquiry, research questions, purpose of research and analytic strategy determine which interview type one would use. This study is qualitative interpretive, therefore it necessitated semi-structured interviews.

The researcher also acknowledges the limitations of interviews, one of which is that they involve personal interaction and therefore cooperation between the researcher and the participants cannot be guaranteed. Participants may be unwilling to share the information and the researcher might ask questions that do not evoke the desired response from participants. Alternatively, the responses may be untruthful (De Vos et al. 2005:299).

On the positive side, interviews are a useful way of collecting large amounts of data quickly, and are an especially effective way of obtaining depth in data. Data was gathered by way of phenomenological interviews to understand lived experiences of the respondent (Strauss & Myburg 2000:26). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:356) define phenomenological interviews as a specific type of

in-depth interview used to study the meanings or essence of lived experiences among selected participants. This type of interview was used because the respondents were seen as the experts on their own life situations. LSTs who were working at schools had experience of implementing IE in the Foundation Phase, and knew when and where they experienced problems. Principals and classroom teachers were also interviewed.

One-to-one interviews were conducted after working hours, not exceeding one hour, because the researcher did not wish to disrupt teaching activities. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed with the participants' permission. Their experiences were to help present support strategies and structures for LSTs and to make recommendations on guidelines in implementing IE in Gauteng.

4.6.2 Observations

Observations of LSTs supporting learners and classroom teachers were made and field notes taken. Observations were included as a research technique of obtaining data because the researcher wished to gather data from the natural setting, i.e., the classroom. Observations entail a systematic noting and recording of events, behaviour, and objects in a social setting chosen for the study. Observations rely mostly on seeing and hearing (Marshall & Rossman 1994:26), whilst according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145) there are two types, participant observation and non-participant observation. In the former the observer engages in the very activities he or she wishes to observe in a natural setting, and becomes a participant. Meanwhile, in non-participant observation the researcher sits and codes every three seconds the verbal exchanges between teacher and LST and observes every activity.

This study necessitated the use of non-participant observation, wherein the researcher was just an observer and did not interfere with the proceedings. Sessions in which LSTs were supporting teachers in the implementation of IE were observed, and thus the researcher did not influence the process. Observation is intentionally unstructured and free-flowing so that the researcher

can take advantage of data sources as they surface (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:145). Field notes of LSTs supporting teachers were taken, obtaining a written description of the settings, people, activities, and direct quotations. This was intended to achieve objective number 3 in the study. Their experiences would help in developing guidelines that are most appropriate for the support of LSTs.

4.6.3 Document analysis

Document analysis entails scrutiny of relevant documents, which can be a valuable source of information (Henning et al. 2004:99), which in the current study gave the researcher an idea of the experiences (the challenges and the successes) of LSTs in the Foundation Phase. They are also valuable sources for supporting the findings made through other research methods such as interviews and observations (Best & Kahn 2006:201).

Document analysis included LSTs' intervention programmes; assessment tools, timetables and registers of learners experiencing barriers. Although some sensitive documents were difficult to access due to the confidentiality of the information, those that were seem proved helpful in recording the processes that took place prior to the study. They provided data about the learners experiencing barriers to learning, assessment tools that the LSTs were using and the intervention programmes to support those learners.

Strydom and Delport (in De Vos 2005:318) point out limitations of using documents as incompleteness of many reports, statistical records and historical documents, with gaps in the data base that cannot be filled in any other way, as well as bias in documents not intended for research. Nevertheless, the researcher used the documents to verify the data collected through interviews and observations. A combination of procedures enabled the researcher to validate and crosscheck the findings. Since each data source has its own strengths and weaknesses, the strength of one procedure can compensate for the weakness of another (Patton 2002:306). This use of multiple sources of data, or 'triangulation', also allows for convergence in support of a particular theory or hypothesis and

assists in establishing the trustworthiness of the research (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:150).

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

In order to identify units of meaning relating to the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education, the researcher used a model from Creswell . According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:150), triangulation involves multiple sources of data being collected with the hope that they will all converge to support a particular theory or hypothesis. In this case, data collected through interviews, observations and document analysis will serve the purpose.

4.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher strove to adhere to the principles of trustworthiness throughout the research. Trustworthiness of data addresses issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability and authenticity, which in quantitative research design are the equivalent to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity respectively (Guba & Lincoln 1994:300). Trustworthiness is a method of ensuring rigour in qualitative research without sacrificing relevance. The findings of the research were the real issues with which the LSTs were faced in the implementation of IE, without leaving out any information. In the next sections the five criteria to ensure trustworthiness and their relevance in the study are discussed.

4.8.1 Credibility

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994:307), credibility in qualitative research is the ability of the researcher to demonstrate a prolonged period of engagement with participants, to provide evidence of persistent observation, and to triangulate by using different sources, different methods and sometimes multiple investigators. To ensure that credibility was achieved the researcher conducted in-depth

interviews with LSTs who had been in these posts for three years prior to data saturation. Interviews allowed the researcher to gather as much information as possible, after which the respondents were able to verbalise their views. The researcher spent three days per week for two weeks with the participants, allowing for a rapport to be built, and trust and confidence gained, a process referred to as 'prolonged engagement' (Polit & Hungler in Mahlo 2006:40).

4.8.2 Transferability

The extent to which the findings can be applied to other settings and contexts is known as 'transferability' (Guba & Lincoln 1994:316). It was hoped that some experiences of the LSTs who were interviewed, and who represented the other LSTs who had been in the system for three years, could be transferred to a wider population of LSTs implementing IE in the Foundation Phase.

4.8.3 Dependability

Dependability of data is the extent to which same findings could be repeated if the same research instruments were simulated with similar respondents under similar conditions (Creswell 2003:220). A more direct method might be using overlapping methods. The researcher used interviews, observations and document analysis to understand the LSTs' experiences of implementing IE in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng, in an attempt to achieve dependability.

4.8.4 Conformability

Conformability refers to the extent to which findings are free from bias (Guba & Lincoln 1994:318). Throughout the data collection process, the keeping of a field journal allowed the researcher to record all issues that could affect a researcher, such as personal attitude and emotions, as well as those of the participants. The researcher ensured this by examining personal views, feelings, and attitudes to determine how they would influence the investigation. Personal field notes about

the researcher's attitudes, feelings, and reactions were recorded, to minimise any bias and preconceived ideas about LSTs in the implementation of IE in Gauteng.

4.8.5 Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the true description of people, events and places. In qualitative research it indicates whether the description and the explanation interconnect. It is the ability of the researcher to report a situation through the eyes of the participants (Cohen et al. 2002:124 & 2007:139) and establishes the degree to which different points of views are fairly and adequately represented (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:23). In order to enhance authenticity, the researcher asked the respondents to validate the identified themes for authenticity and ensure that their perceptions would be understood correctly, and accurately captured and reported (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:155).

Through the researcher's observation or reflective journal, data was recorded and reported, taking into account the different social situations (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:67). Consequently, despite professional editing of the report, the researcher used the services of a critical reader for every section of the research and wrote a final report about the study.

4.9 REFLEXIVITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative researchers acknowledge that they are part of the world they study. They are systematically monitoring their influence, bracketing their biases and recognising that emotional response is part of their research responsibility (Hatch & McLaughlin in Hatch 2006:498). The researcher recognised that personal background as an Inclusive Education specialist shaped the interpretation and positioned self in the research. Acknowledgement was made that one's personal interpretation flowed from cultural and historical experiences, therefore, the researcher made sense of (or interpreted) the meaning others had about the world.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:141) state that researchers bring their own biographies to the research situation and participants behave in a particular way in their presence. This means that the researcher's life history that is reflected during the research process influences the behaviour of the participants. Reflexivity is the assumption that researchers are as much a part of research as the individuals being researched. Reflexivity involves the idea of awareness that researchers are reflexive when they investigate.

In addition, reflexivity implies a shift in the way the researcher understands data and data collection (Berg 2001:139). To reduce reflexivity, the researcher observed closely and constantly personal interactions with participants, reactions, roles, biases and any other matters that might have biased the research. These were kept in the research journal.

4.10 ETHICS IN RESEARCH

Ethical guidelines serve as standards and a basis upon which each researcher ought to evaluate his or her own conduct, and the guidelines should be internalised in the personality of the researcher (De Vos 2011:57). With human beings the objects in the study, the researcher adhered strictly to the following principles of research throughout the study:

- Research permission was requested from the Research Ethics committee of the College of Education of the University Of South Africa (UNISA).
- Permission was requested from the GDE to conduct a study within the identified primary schools in Gauteng (see Appendix A). Subsequent to attaining this permission (see Appendix B), the researcher personally visited the schools to inform the principals and participating LSTs about the nature and rationale of the study and how they would be involved. Parents and learners were not observed and thus permission was only sought from LST's. Written permission was requested from the principals for their schools

to be part of the study as well as the participating teachers to take part in the research (see example on Appendix D and E).

- Participation in the research remained optional and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage. They were asked to give written consent to be observed, interviewed, analysis of their documents and consulted regarding the correctness of the interviews (see Appendix E).
- Participants were assured that the principles of anonymity, confidentiality and privacy would and will prevail, and therefore pseudonyms were to be used (see Appendix E).
- Assurance was given on the issues of human dignity, protection against harm, freedom of choice and expression and access to information (see Appendix E).
- Participants were to be kept informed regarding the progress of research and the provision of given feedback in writing once the research is completed.
- Assurance was given that the audio-tapes of the interviews were to be locked away until transcriptions were completed, after which they shall be destroyed.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has given a description of the research design and methodology. The results of this study may guide discourses about the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to the implementation of IE. The researcher believed that the outcomes may also be applicable to a broader context in terms of implementing IE in the Foundation Phase. Furthermore, the findings may be used to settle on the appropriate support strategies for LSTs and improve their working conditions. Data will be analysed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A qualitative investigation conducted as part of this study serves as a source of information in determining the experiences of Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) in the Foundation Phase, with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in Gauteng. The relevant literature was also reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. The interviews provided valuable data, to be presented verbatim in this chapter so that the voice of the respondents can be heard, leading to an in-depth understanding of their experiences. LSTs were observed during the sessions, and the notes were transcribed and the documents that the LSTs used to support teachers and learners were also collected and analysed. The data obtained from interviews with principals and classroom teachers will also be presented. Discussion of the findings is presented under categorised themes supported by statements from interviews with the LSTs, principals and classroom teachers and the documents analysed. Data was presented then followed by a brief analysis by the researcher.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Qualitative data analysis takes place throughout the data collection process, the researcher reflecting constantly on impressions, relationships and connections. According to Bassey (2002:84), the process of data analysis is an “intellectual struggle” with the raw data collected. Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among them (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:483). The verbatim accounts of the interviews were transcribed, different categories relating to the research topic formed and information from interviews, observations and document analysis analysed and arranged according to themes. The aim of data analysis is to yield significant and valid answers to the research question.

In order to identify units of meaning relating to the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to the implementation of IE, a model was adopted from Creswell. The researcher started by transcribing the data through making a text from taped interviews and documents, and typing them as word processing documents. The process commenced by reading all the data and then dividing it into smaller meaningful units. Data segments or units were then organised into a system predominantly derived from the data, and comparisons used to build and refine categories which were then modified. The steps are:

- The researcher reads all data, and breaks down large bodies of text into smaller meaningful units in the form of sentences or individual words.
- The entire data is perused several times to get a sense of what it contains, and in the process the researcher writes in the margins for possible categories or interpretation.
- The researcher then identifies possible categories or themes, perhaps sub-themes or sub-categories, and then classifies each piece of data accordingly. At this point the researcher assumes it will be easy to get a sense of what the data means.
- Finally, the researcher integrates and summarises the data.

(Creswell, 2002:150)

The analysis of data continues throughout the research in qualitative data. The researcher attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the topic under investigation and continually refined the interpretations throughout the analysis. Profiles of Learning Support Teachers, information on the principals and classroom teachers are discussed in the next section.

5.3 PROFILES OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

In Table 5.1 the main respondents (LSTs) of the study are introduced, from information acquired during the interview sessions. The respondents were asked in the first ten minutes of the interview to tell the researcher about themselves,

their training and experience. Their responses were written down as part of the field notes and later analysed. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

The respondents will be identified as 'Respondents A-G' in the study, with their true identity remaining known only to the researcher and the supervisor.

Table 5.1: Profile of the respondents (R) - Learning Support Teachers

| R | Qualification | Work profile |
|----------|--|---|
| A | Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD) Remedial Diploma BEd (Honours) in Education Currently registered for Masters in Curriculum studies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 years' experience • Taught at the early learning Centre. • Taught all the grades in the Foundation Phase. • 4 years as a Learning Support Teacher (LST) in Gauteng |
| B | Junior Primary Teachers Diploma Remedial Diploma BEd (Hons) Education Training and Development Short learning programme in inclusive training and development (current study) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 years' teaching experience • Work at primary schools • Taught Foundation Phase • Learner support education giving support to mainstream schools |
| C | Junior Primary Teachers Diploma Remedial diploma BEd (Hons) teaching and learning support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 years' teaching experience • Taught Grades 1-3 • Four years as a LST in Gauteng |
| D | Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD) Further Diploma Inclusion Currently doing BEd (Hons) Taught Gr1-2003-2005 Learning Support Teacher Gauteng | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 years' teaching experience • Taught mainly at the primary schools • taught Foundation Phase aid class • learning support in mainstream schools |
| E | Junior Primary Teachers Diploma Remedial diploma BEd (Hons) teaching and learning support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 years' teaching experience • Taught mainly at the primary schools • taught Foundation Phase aid class • learning support in mainstream schools |
| F | Senior Primary Teachers Diploma Diploma in learners with barriers BEd (Hons) management law and policy (current) study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 years' teaching experience • Work profile: • Taught at a primary school for 10 years • Taught in a special class for 3 years • Learning support teacher 2006 to date |
| G | Senior Primary Teachers Diploma (SPTD) Diploma in learners with barriers to learning and development BEd (Hons) inclusive education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 years teaching experience • Work at primary schools • Taught Foundation Phase • Learner support education giving support to mainstream schools |

Respondent A was 42 years old and a Learning Support Teacher (LST) during the time of data collection. In her initial teacher training she had not been trained to teach learners with barriers but upgraded her qualifications by registering and attaining a diploma in remedial education. She taught mainstream learners for 16 years, taught at the early learning centre and taught all the grades in the Foundation Phase. She had four years' experience as an LST in Gauteng. Her brother's child was in Grade six but unable to read or write due to a learning problem, which had motivated Respondent A to remaining in learning support, thus enabling her to help her niece.

Respondent B is 44 years old and is presently a Learning Support Teacher in Gauteng. Her qualifications are Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD), Remedial Diploma, and BEd (Hons) education training and development, as well as having undergone a short learning programme in Inclusive Education. In her initial training she was not trained to teach learners having barriers to learning, but she registered to study part time and qualified as a remedial therapist. Her experience in the mainstream schools is 11 years of teaching in the Foundation Phase, whereas she has been LST in the Foundation Phase for four years. Her own daughter has been diagnosed with a hearing impairment and is using hearing aids.

Respondent C was a 44 year old female with 16 years' teaching experience, at the time teaching at the primary school for mainstream learners, especially in the Foundation Phase. She had not been trained to teach learners experiencing barriers to learning in her initial teacher training, but became interested in learning support when her younger brother's child was involved in an accident that left him paralyzed and a user of a wheelchair for mobility. The school did not want to accept him at first because of his disability, but she had to intervene and had a meeting with the principal, which led to the acceptance of the child. She further stated that it was through her initiative that the school had ramps and was wheelchair friendly. She has four years of experience in learning support and liked what she was doing.

Respondent D was a 45 year old female with JPTD, Further Education Diploma in

IE and was registered for BEd (Hons) in IE. She had not been trained to teach learners with barriers, but had become interested in IE after attending a workshop in which she was introduced to White Paper Six. She taught in the Foundation Phase for seven years and in the aid class for two years. In 2006 she applied for a post as an LST, which she had occupied up to the time the study was conducted.

Respondent E was a 42 year old female with a JPTD, Remedial diploma and a BEd (Hons) in Teaching and Learning. Initially she was trained to teach learners who were only in the mainstream schools. She taught in the Foundation Phase for eight years and was later seconded to the aid class because she had a diploma in remedial education, where she worked for three years. She mentioned that she was experienced in the area of IE and Learning Support. In 2006 she had applied for an LTS post, in which she had been employed up to the time of this study.

Respondent F was 46 years old and held Senior Primary Teachers Diploma (SPTD) and Learners with Barriers Diploma. Her study at the time of the interviews was BEd (Hons) Management Law and Policy. She said that although she was in Learning Support she had decided to register for a qualification in Policy and Law because she realised there was something wrong with the implementation of policies in South Africa. Her main aim was to challenge policy implementation with facts, especially IE. Although she was qualified to teach in the Senior Phase, when she was first employed it was in the Foundation Phase, where she taught for 10 years. She was then seconded to teach in a special class for three years, after which she became an LST from 2006 to date

Respondent G was 39 years old with a Senior Primary Teachers Diploma (SPTD). Her initial training had not included teaching learners with barriers to learning, but she developed an interest in IE after being nominated to attend a conference by the principal of her previous school. She then registered and qualified for a further diploma on the subject of Learners with Barriers to Development. At the time of the interviews she was registered for a BEd (Hons) in Inclusive Education with only five modules left before completion. She had taught for nine years at a mainstream school, although she was qualified to teach in the senior phase. Her first job was in the Foundation Phase, where she had taught before being

employed as an LST.

The ages of the LSTs were 39, 42, 42, 44, 44, 45 and 46, thus ranging from 39 to 46, and it can be concluded that most were in middle age, a time when they might expect to be established in terms of a career and finances. It should be noted that although all had trained before inclusion was adopted in South Africa, they were open to change and thus able to accommodate diversity.

All LSTs were females, perhaps evidence that the profession is favoured by teachers with female sensitivity and patience. They had also accumulated much experience in the Foundation Phase field, and though none had trained in IE in their initial training, all had qualified as Foundation Phase classroom teachers, except the two who had a qualification for the Senior Phase. It became clear that three had developed an interest in IE for personal reasons. The LSTs had experience of teaching mainstream learners ranging from five to fifteen years, and had been working in the area of learning support from one to six years. They had Diplomas in teaching and a certificate in learning support, IE or special needs. This indicates that LSTs are taking the initiative to upgrade their qualifications and that all were suitably qualified to hold those positions. Furthermore, they had been in the system of education for a long time before the introduction of IE. It was evident that they were qualified to teach learners experiencing barriers to learning. For validation of data the researcher also held interviews with principals and classroom teachers. As mentioned in Chapters One and Four, the principals of the schools in which the LSTs were providing support on the day when the follow-up interviews with LSTs were done, were also interviewed. The rationale behind this was the researcher's belief that for LSTs to function effectively at schools the principals needs to acknowledge and support what they are doing.

5.4. INFORMATION OF PRINCIPALS

In this section the principals who participated in the study are introduced, based on information acquired during the interview sessions when the researcher was conducting a follow-up session with the main respondents. The principals were

asked in the first ten minutes of the interview to tell the researcher about themselves, their training and experience. Their responses were written down as field notes.

The principals were identified as 'Respondents' P1-P7 in the study, with their true identity remaining known only to the researcher and the supervisor.

Respondent P1 was male and 47 years old at the time of study. He had qualified as a teacher in the early 1990s and taught for nine years at a primary school. He has been a principal for three years. He mentioned that he had a passion for working with learners experiencing barriers to learning, which is why two of his HODs were qualified in remedial education, even though they were unable to do the work fully because of management commitments. However, at least they had an idea of dealing with learners experiencing barriers to learning when the LST was not there. He acknowledged, recognised and supported the work of the LST. The school had during the time of the study 925 learners, and the medium of instruction was English.

Respondent P2 was male, and 47 years old at the time of study. He had qualified as a teacher in the early 1990s and had been a Deputy Principal of an ELSEN school for six years. Now principal in the mainstream school in his eighth year, he mentioned that he supported inclusion and had an experience of working with learners experiencing barriers to learning because he had been a deputy principal of a special school. He further mentioned that he was aware of all the procedures of referring a learner to a special school and knew that the learners who deserve to go to one are usually those who are severely impaired and can do nothing for themselves. He had a passion for working with learners experiencing barriers to learning and encouraged teachers to identify them as early as possible. He acknowledged the work being done by the LST. The school had 1312 learners.

Respondent P3 was female and 48 years at the time of data collection, having qualified as a teacher in the late 1990s and taught as a primary schoolteacher for ten years before being promoted to a management post. At the time of the study she had been a principal for seven years, and mentioned that despite the shortage

of resources, such as hearing aids and classrooms that were wheelchair friendly, the school was trying very hard to support learners who encountered problems during their academic careers. She said that she encouraged the teachers to attend all the workshops so that they could keep abreast of changes in education, inclusive education included, and believed that learners were not the same and so should be supported if they were having problems. She acknowledged that the LST was helping them greatly. The school had 1445 learners at the time of study and Zulu was the medium of instruction.

Respondent 4 was female and 56 years old at the time of the study, having qualified as a teacher in the late 1980s. She had lectured at a college of education for 11 years before being a principal up to and including the time of the study. She was in favour of Inclusive Education and believed that supporting learners individually improved their reading. She believed that if learners were able to read and write then the problems experienced at schools would be over. At her school there were five older white ladies who taught learners reading and writing one day per week. These ladies were called 'reading gogos'² and it was through them and one teacher's initiative that they were now having a good relationship and the learners at schools were winning reading and spelling competitions. She supported what the LST was doing at the school, especially on social problems that the learner experienced and which the classroom teachers could not always handle. The school had 350 learners at the time of study and Setswana was the medium of instruction.

Respondent P5 was male and 61 years old at the time of data collection. He had qualified as a teacher in the late 1980s and had been a primary school teacher for 11 years before being promoted to principal, a post he had held for 15 years. He had a very negative attitude towards Inclusive Education, complaining of not having been trained for inclusion. However, now that he had to practice it he was willing to do so. He was even considering registering for a course but did not know which one. He had mixed feelings about Inclusive Education but hoped it would work. The school had 242 learners at the time of study and the language of

² 'gogo' is a South African term for grandmother.

teaching and learning (LOLT) was Setswana.

Respondent P6 was 62 years old male during the time of the study, having qualified as a teacher in the late 1980s. He had been a primary school teacher for 11 years prior to being promoted to principal in the mainstream school, a post he had held for 16 years. He believed learners with barriers to learning belonged at the special school because teachers were not trained in Inclusive Education. His school had been identified as a full service school but he had no idea what that implied. He hoped the DoE would offer him courses on it so that he would know what the expectations of the school were. According to him, Inclusive Education and a full service school were the same. The school had 1211 learners at the time of study and the LOLT was Zulu.

Respondent P7, male, was 63 years old at the time of data collection, having resigned in April 2010. He had qualified as a teacher in the late 1970s, and had 20 years experience as a teacher, 15 as a principal. During the study he was very resistant to the idea of Inclusive Education and strongly believed that it would never work. He believed that learners who were experiencing barriers to learning needed special teachers who were trained to teach them. He said that he did not have a problem because he was going to retire shortly after. The school had 730 learners at the time of the study.

The principals who were respondents in the study were aged 47, 47, 48, 56, 61, 62 and 63, that is in a range from 47 to 63, so it can be concluded that most were experienced in the teaching and management positions they were holding. The gender ratio was five males to two females, perhaps evidence that the management positions were still male-dominated. Four of the principals supported the implementation of Inclusive Education, their ages ranging from 47 to 56. Two principals were resistant to change but they believed that IE would work if proper plans were in place, albeit they did not understand the value of including learners with barriers in the mainstream school. The principals aged 62 and 63 were negative about change. One was undecided because he displayed mixed feelings about Inclusive Education. Surprisingly, there was one principal who was willing to register for a course in Inclusive Education, even though he did not know which

one. This showed his willingness to upgrade his qualification, despite his age, and draws a positive picture because so long as the principals understand and support the values of Inclusive Education they will be willing to help learners experiencing barriers to learning and development.

Considering the tight schedule of the principals, only two questions were asked, with additional probing questions where necessary:

1. What are your experiences regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng?
2. What are the strategies that can be used to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase?

In the next section the classroom teachers who participated in the study are introduced.

5.5 INFORMATION OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS

The following information was acquired during the interview sessions. The classroom teachers were asked in the first ten minutes of the interview to tell the researcher briefly about themselves, their training and experience. Their responses were written down as field notes.

The classroom teachers were identified as 'Respondents' CT1-CT7 in the study, with their true identity remaining known only to the researcher and the supervisor.

Respondent CT 1 was female and 38 years old at the time of study. She qualified as a Foundation Phase teacher in the late 1990s and taught in the Foundation Phase since then until the time of the study. She has been a post level one teacher for thirteen years at the same school. During the time of the study she had 45 learners in the classroom and she teaches Grade one. She liked the idea of having a Learning Support Teacher at the school but she was sometimes unable to use the strategies that are supplied by the LST because she had many learners in class.

Respondent CT 2 was a female and 44 years old at the time of the study. She qualified as a Foundation Phase teacher in the early 1990s and taught in the Foundation Phase as a post level one teacher for five years. After obtaining her Honours degree in Education Management she applied for senior posts and she was appointed to a level two post as HoD Foundation Phase at the school in which she was teaching at the time of the study. She was the classroom teacher for Grade three and had 50 learners in her class. She said that she had a passion for Inclusive Education and liked working with learners with problems. She acknowledged that LSTs were helping them greatly.

Respondent CT3 was a female and 48 years old during the time of the study. She qualified as primary school teacher in the early 1990s and taught in the Intermediate Phase (Grade four-six) for six years before being appointed as an HoD in the Foundation Phase at another school for three years. During the time of the study she was a Deputy Principal of her present school, which was a level three post, and a classroom teacher for 39 Grade two learners. She was also coordinator of an Institution Based Support Team (ILST). She mentioned that sometimes it was not easy to intervene in all the cases as she was also on the management team at the school.

Respondent CT4 was female and 50 years old at the time of the study. She qualified as a primary school teacher in the late 1980s and taught in the Foundation Phase at the same school. She upgraded her studies and qualified as a remedial therapist in the early 1990s. She further obtained her Honours Degree in Education Management in the late 1990s. During the time of the study she was finalising her master's degree in Education Management. She was the Deputy Principal and a classroom teacher of 38 Grade twos. The previous year she had been a chairperson of the SBST, but because her management issues were too much she decided to step down. She mentioned that she was supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in her class but did not know what happened to them after they proceeded to other grades in the Intermediate and Senior Phase.

Respondent CT5 was a 57 years old female at the time of the study. She qualified as a primary school teacher in the late 1970s and taught at three different schools,

until the time of the study. She taught in the Foundation Phase at three primary schools for thirty two years and was the HoD on post level two. She was the chairperson of the SBST during the time of the study, and maintained that the SBST was not functional, saying that as the chairperson she was still trying to make the team work. She was undecided about whether or not she supported inclusion, but thought that as long as they had many learners in the class it would be difficult to implement. During the time of the study she was teaching a Grade one class with 45 learners.

Respondent CT6 was a 57 years old female. When she started teaching she was a private teacher (with no teaching qualification) in the early 1970s. She studied through correspondence and qualified as a primary school teacher in the late 1970s. She taught Grade ones for 32 years, and said that she liked teaching at the lowest grade because she believed that once a child was given a good foundation the child was prepared for the rest of his or her life. She was an HoD of the Foundation Phase during the time of the study, and received a bursary to study for a certificate in remedial education for one year, which is when she developed a concern for learners struggling in class. She said that she knew all the 40 learners in her class by name and knew which had learning barriers. She did not like referring those in her class to the SBST as it was there by name only and not practically functional. She preferred making the interventions herself, and states that the LST always helped her with intervention strategies.

Respondent CT7 was a 58 year old female at the time of the study. She qualified as a primary school teacher in the early 1970s, and was teaching 41 learners in a Grade two class. The Foundation Phase HoD, she was a post level two teacher with 48 learners in her class. She had a remedial education diploma and believed that inclusion would work provided teachers were passionate about their work and had fewer learners in class. She added that the teachers needed an intensive practical training in IE so they could handle these learners in class.

The classroom teachers who were respondents in the study were aged 38, 44, 48, 50, 57, 57 and 58, that is in a range from 38 to 58, so it can be concluded that most were experienced in the teaching and management in the Foundation

Phase. Only one was a post level one teacher while five were HoDs, on post level two and only one was a Deputy Principal on post level three. They were all females, evidence that teaching in the Foundation Phase is dominated by females. Three of the classroom teachers interviewed had a qualification in remedial education, which is a good sign because it is presumed they are able to identify and help the learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classes because of their qualification in remedial education. On the contrary, two classroom teachers said that they were unable to use the intervention strategies that were developed by the LST because they had many learners in the class. In addition two said because they were involved with management issues, it was not easy for them to use the intervention strategies.

It is important to note that in the presentation of the findings the themes and the sub-themes are highly interrelated and that often a comment by an LST, classroom teachers or principal would be related to more than one theme. Presentation of data is followed by a brief analysis by the researcher. Direct codes from any of the research instruments (interviews, observations and documents analysed) are presented *in italics*.

5.6 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The data collected centred around the main research question, “What are the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to implementation of IE in Gauteng?” The data presented was obtained through qualitative methods of collecting data and the main respondents were LSTs. As indicated in Chapter 4, data was collected until saturation was reached. The following methods of data collection were used: individual interviews and analysis of documents. Additional information was obtained through observation where possible.

The results and analysis of data are presented and discussed according to the identified themes of experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase with reference to the implementation of IE in Gauteng. The themes are:

- Matters pertaining to Inclusive Education policy
- Domestic factors of learners
- Classroom factors
- Management factors
- Resources
- Collaboration.

5.7 MATTERS PERTAINING TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

The LSTs were asked to indicate their experiences with regard to the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng.

5.7.1 Introduction

As introduced in Chapter 2, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory refers to the macro-system as the level at which policy decisions about education are made, viz., the national Department of Education (DoE) in the South African context. It provides the provinces with the guidelines to implement a particular policy according to their needs, including on Inclusive Education. However, at this level there is an absence of support strategies in the policies to address the needs of LSTs and ensure successful implementation of IE. The findings revealed that LSTs had various needs in terms of support, (discussed in the following section). The findings reiterate the relationship between the various systems as set out by Bronfenbrenner.

5.7.2 Matters pertaining to Inclusive Education policy at national level

Many aspects pertaining to Inclusive Education policy as set out by the (DoE) were mentioned by the respondents. A separate section is devoted to the aspects they brought to the fore.

In Chapter Three it was noted that the DoE is responsible for formulating policy and providing guidelines on how the provinces should implement the policy. There are several matters in the policy which are unclear, such as admission of learners, resources, overcrowded classrooms and common examination paper. LST F was concerned about learners who were underage and found it difficult to cope in class: *“They enter school at an early age, and you find that they are not well developed, with the kind of teachers we have, they don’t understand how to support those learners”*. Similarly, LST D said: *“The common barrier in the learners is age, they are underage, because of the policy that was introduced which says the learner who is five or five and half can go to school”*. This indicates learners who are admitted to school at an early age and those who are not coping in class because they are not yet well developed or school-ready, which creates a problem in class as teachers do not know how to support them. This was also evident during the observations and what the LSTs reported:

Mary Tsiee³ was a six year old girl in Grade one during the time of the study. She had attended six sessions with the LST but she was still struggling with writing her name and surname. She seemed uninterested in her schoolwork and when given instructions took time to do what was requested. The classroom teacher had referred her to the LST because she was having difficulty in coping with the Grade One work and was very playful. According to the classroom teacher, the learner did not see anything in class, but was stuck with the learner because the policy allowed six-year olds to be admitted to Grade One.

This affirms the findings in the interviews that sometimes learners are admitted to Grade one when they are not yet school-ready, and this creates the problem for the teachers because they do not know how to accommodate them without disadvantaging the other learners in the classroom.

LST E emphasised that it was not easy to implement IE if the class was overcrowded: *“If we have small number of learners in a class, so that maybe the end product will be what is expected because of the greater number in classes is not easy to implement IE”*. The teachers found it difficult to identify those with

³ Pseudonyms are used to preserve anonymity.

barriers to learning and therefore it was difficult for LSTs to intervene. The LSTs felt frustrated when they had urgent issues that need to be referred to a professional, such as a speech therapist, of whom there is a shortage in the DoE. Consequently, learners with specific problems are not easily helped, creating a further challenge. Even if the learners are identified early, it takes time before they receive assistance, if at all.

According to the White Paper 6 on IE there should be a provision of resources to ensure successful implementation, but this presents another challenge to the LSTs, as highlighted by respondent A: *“Where they said inclusive education should have resources persons, like therapist of which we do not have in our schools, we should have a school nurse, so there is never sufficient manpower”*. LST D illustrated the problem: *“We do not have suitable resources at times you don’t even have stationery to work with.”* The sentiments were echoed by G: *“Nothing, we do not have any resources and the teachers will ask you what we must do, they are expecting miracles”*. It is important for LSTs to have relevant materials to work with, for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Reflecting lack of clarity about setting of common examination papers in the policy of inclusion, LST D reported that: *“The common paper tests that they are writing in the schools they don’t accommodate inclusion, it does not accommodate learners with barriers and they can’t cope with these tests.”* This was affirmed by LST E: *“Maybe if the government can do something about the tests, so it still shows that inclusion is still not understood because if they understood inclusion they would accommodate those learners who can’t cope in those tests”*. The policy emphasises the importance of changing the methods of teaching to accommodate the pace of different learners, including those with barriers. The LSTs adapt the curriculum so that their needs can be met, but when it comes to setting common exam papers those learners are not catered for. In turn, their performance is not good because neither their pace nor level of understanding is catered for, creating a negative spiral.

When asked about their experiences with reference to the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase, LSTs noted both successes and challenges. The provinces

implement policy according to their provincial needs, as accepted by the national DoE, and as such the nine provinces have responsibility for implementing policy, Gauteng included, but according to the LSTs this is not happening the way it should.

All LSTs interviewed agreed that IE is an educational strategy that can contribute to a democratic society because it embraces the values of equality, human rights and recognition of diversity. They were positive and excited about the policy of inclusion because they believed that if implemented the way it was planned, every learner would be given a chance to reach his or her potential. This is clear in the words of this LST B: *“There is a difference between each and every learners, it recognises their potential that they all can learn”*, and was affirmed by the LST F: *“I think inclusion is a good idea because each and every learner is unique and learners learn in different ways”*. These responses also show that most LSTs believe it will work.

Contrary to their positive attitudes, all the LSTs had reservations regarding the implementation of IE, as revealed by LST B: *“Some things are good on paper, but the implementation part of it, like where they say inclusive education should have resources”*. She believed IE is good on paper but the implementation is problematic as, without adequate resources and support, it will not be easy to implement. LST D was also of the opinion that the practical implementation was a problem: *“so that’s why at the beginning I said inclusion is there by the word but when coming for the real practical implementation is a problem”*. That implementation was a problem was affirmed by the LST F, who said that: *“Most of South African policies are good on paper but the implementation is a huge challenge”*. Those who are supposed to implement change of the new policies are people at the grassroots, namely teachers, and if they are not catered for the policy will not be implemented effectively.

Learning Support Teachers strongly believe that to achieve the goals of IE, support should be *channelled* to those directly involved with the implementation, in this case the LSTs and classroom teachers. This was clear in the words of LST C: *“I think if the Head Office or the people who are more vested in IE can involve*

those who are on the grass roots because the way I see it, it's only Head Office and district who take decisions, but the people who are hands on, those who are practically implementing are left out, are not empowered and are not capacitated". This LST pointed out that they were not involved in decision-making at either district or head office level, yet they were the ones implementing the policy so they knew what would work and what would not.

From the literature study in Chapter Two, support was indicated as the most important factor that contributes to the effective implementation of IE. LST A said: *"We have four clusters and each one of us work on their own, even though we are here in the same district, we do not work the same, we work differently especially in terms of assessment, so they need to tell us what to do".*

The LSTs felt that supportive procedures should be in place in order to strengthen their roles, so that they would not feel neglected or isolated when implementing the policy: LST D said *"Those workshops they don't even come and observe what we are doing, they don't. We are all doing different things, we don't know whether we are on the right track or not."* Of significance here is the call for monitoring and support on the part of the district, without which the LSTs feel lost and unsure of what they are doing.

The majority of LSTs experienced challenges with regard to the use of assessment tools, which they use to check the learners' level of functioning. LST C describes it this way: *"We need a common way of assessing, common way of supporting learners and a common way of doing IEP, common way of reporting."*

The opinion was affirmed by the following statements:

B: *"I help them to administer the assessment, usually prefer curriculum based assessment because it is easy to interpret".*

E: *"Because I can do assessment of basics in the Foundation Phase the other one is doing the whole reading uniformity, we are not doing the common thing".*

D: *Is a diagnostic assessment we assess learners in the Foundation Phase in their mother tongue and a little bit of English and Maths".*

C: *"We use the UCT [University of Cape Town] scholastics test, we go to the basics".*

E: *"Aeeh, in Foundation Phase the tool that we use is letter identification, the twenty-six letters, to check if the learners know how to sound it or they know the names, then we mark those letters that are spelled correctly, thereafter we come to building of the letter and words, because others they sound and combine it they have got a problem with it."*

The above comments showed that LSTs were confused about which tool to use for assessing learners with barriers, indicating a lack of guidance in the implementation of IE. They expressed feelings of helplessness and confusion about the correct tools to use, a frustration compounded when even people at the districts were unsure as to which tool to use. This was also confirmed by the data from analysis of documents. The evidence from LSTs assessment tools revealed the following:

- Respondent A had the following assessment tools in her file: one minute spelling test, one minute math's test, sound recognition worksheet, Northern Sotho spelling and isiXhosa spelling worksheets. When asked how she knew which tool was appropriate to use for a particular problem, she said that sometimes if a teacher identified that the learner had a maths problem then she would use a one minute maths test. Then the home language of the learner was used when she wanted to know if the learner understood particular concepts in her mother tongue, and sound

recognition was used when she wanted to see if the learner was able to recognise sounds.

- Respondent B had the following in her file: curriculum-based assessment, Xitsonga spelling test, graded reading, a worksheet with 30 operational signs each, i.e., addition, multiplication, division and subtraction for assessing learners. When asked how she knew which tool was for use with a particular problem she answered that if problems were maths-related then she would use the operational signs one. To check the level of the learners reading she used graded reading worksheets.
- Respondent C had in her file for assessing learners a UCT (University of Cape Town) scholastics test. She added that sometimes the interpretation of these tests were difficult because the teachers were not trained on the interpretation of the tests.
- Respondent D had the following in her file for assessing learners, a diagnostic assessment, visual perception test, and auditory perception test. This LST preferred using these tests in the Grade One class because there were learners with perceptual problems in some schools. She mentioned that although she developed the assessment tools herself, they helped her in identifying the problem with the learner and so assists where possible.
- Respondent E had the following assessment tools in her file a worksheet: letter identification and the 26 letters. When asked how she knew that the test was relevant for a particular problem, she said that if learners had sound problems it helped them to check if they knew how to sound them or if they knew the names: *"... then we mark those letters that are spelled correctly, thereafter we come to building of the letter and words, because others they sound and combine it they have got a problem with it."* (Neale Analysis for Reading Ability).
- Respondent F had the following in her file worksheet: items for reading, sound recognition, and summarised scholastic assessment. She gave the learners worksheets according to their ages and grades to check their reading ability and recognition of sounds. She mentioned that for the

summarised scholastic assessment she did not know how to score them, but just used the first column.

- Respondent G had the following in her file: worksheets for spelling, S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, S7 worksheets) and for mathematics. She used them to check spelling, and the level of mathematics of the learner, though most of the time she used reading worksheets

LSTs agreed that implementation of Inclusive Education could be compromised by uncertainty in the use of different in tools for assessing learners. This is compounded by the confusion that exists within the districts, because even the district personnel do not know which assessment tools to recommend to the LSTs. This shows the importance of having guidelines in the use of tools. During document analysis it was clear that LSTs were using different assessment tools, perhaps any one they had to hand. This was also evident during the observations all the LSTs were using different assessment tools from each other:

Respondent A used an English one minute reading test, to test a learner who was having a spelling problem. Mbali Fakude was a nine year old Grade two learner during the time of study. When the LST gave her the spelling test she could not pronounce a single word so the LST pronounced the words and let Mbali pronounce them after her. She said for that day they were only going to concentrate on five words until Mbali was able to say them herself. After several repetitions Mbali could only remember two words. The LST called the teacher and explained how she must help Mbali on a daily basis. Mbali was also given the words to practice at home. Contrary to that, LST D used a different assessment tool for a learner who experienced the same problem (spelling) in the same grade, but at a different school.

Thato Mogaka was an eight year old boy in Grade Two during the time of study he could not spell the words. During his session, LSTs used cards to assess his spelling skills and level of functioning. The learner was given cards with pictures and was supposed to identify the pictures and then guess what was on them. Thato was able to identify the pictures and guess the names but it became difficult for him when a set of cards was given to him without pictures, because he could

not remember the words. The LST explained the situation to the teacher and advised her how she could support Thato when she was not there as support.

This clearly indicates that the LSTs were using different assessment tools to assess learners, but most of them are uncertain as to whether or not they were doing the right thing because they did not have any guidance on the use of assessment tools.

From the data above, the majority of LSTs highlighted as some of the factors that are affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education and related to the policy, are underage learners who are admitted to Grade One, overcrowding, lack of resources, setting of common paper but not accommodating learners with barriers, teachers not being involved in decision making when policy is designed, and the use of assessment tools that are different.

5.7.3 Better planning on the implementation of Inclusive Education

The implementation of a policy requires clear guidelines to all stakeholders involved. It is good to introduce policies that address the problems that society faces and addresses past inequalities, but adequate planning and clear guidelines on how that policy is going to be implemented are necessary. The principals had mixed feeling about the implementation of Inclusive Education, with P1 having this to say about the implementation: *“Well that one is a higher grade question, I really do not know (laugh). I don’t know if our schools are ready for implementation of IE. We want to do that, but do we have the capacity to do that?”* The success of implementing IE can be realised by giving the policy implementers clear guidelines of the aspects which are indicated in the policy. If the policy says more specialist teachers will be employed to fast-track the implementation of IE, the DoE should come up with a plan of where those teachers will be found and prepare the necessary resources they will need to fulfil their duties.

Respondent P2 mentioned that the implementation of IE would mean giving the learners support: *“I think IE means to include even the learners that are very slow in education, to accommodate them to give them support also we have got*

learners who are not well they must be included in the school situation because their mind is still working although they are not in good shape". It is worth noting that even principals acknowledged that there were learners who were very slow and their needs should be accommodated, particularly in terms of human and material resources. As such, there should be plans in place to accommodate those learners who need such assistance. P2 emphasised that: *"Even though learners were physically disabled it did not mean that they were also intellectually disabled"*. He strongly believed that those learners could be accommodated if appropriate support were provided.

Principal 3 believed that for the implementation of IE to succeed, teachers must realise that: *"Learners are not the same in terms of talents, skills, capabilities,"* that is they should be aware of those learners with potential and support, and nourish what talents they have so that they can achieve academically. In addition, Principal 4 emphasised the importance of recognising the skills the learners possess: *"Learners academically may not be up to scratch but they have these skills that need to be identified."* It is worth noting that all the principals interviewed emphasised that not everyone was going to succeed academically. There were people who were not academically gifted but who were talented in other fields. Teachers had a responsibility to identify those learners and nourish their talents for a better future. This indicates that some principals were positive about change and even embraced and supported Inclusive Education policy.

5.7.4 Inadequate district support

In Chapter Three, support is defined as all activities that increase the capacity of a school to respond to diversity. The GDE demonstrated its commitment to addressing the barriers of learners by employing LSTs to address those issues which the district officials could not reach. Support is provided on issues of curriculum and institutional development to ensure that the teaching and learning framework is responsive to the full range of learning needs. Where necessary, LSTs provide direct learning support to learners where the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) is unable to respond. The challenge is mainly the needs of

the LSTs that are not met, in order for them to fulfil their duties effectively. If the LSTs are not assisted continuously while implementing this particular policy (IE), the vision of IE may not be realised. It is clear from the analyses of data that LSTs are willing and trying to fulfil their duties by supporting teachers and learners in schools so that those who are experiencing barriers to learning can benefit. However, most of the time they are discouraged by lack of support, which is necessary for LSTs if they are to meet their obligations.

The policy on IE draws attention to the importance of strengthening education support services as the DoE believes that the key to reducing barriers to learning within all education and training lies in a strengthened education support service. As such, the DBST should provide a full range of education support services, such as professional development in curriculum and assessment to the institutional level support teams. This includes teachers and LSTs.

In Chapter Three, it is noted that the districts implement the policy according to their different needs. However, all LSTs feel that they are inadequately supported by the district in terms of monitoring and motivation, as expressed by LST C: *“Those workshops they don’t even come and observe what we are doing they don’t we are all doing different things we don’t know whether we are on the right track”*. Inadequate support from the district was strongly emphasised by LSTs who believed that if they could be appropriately supported during workshops and observed during their sessions with learner and teachers then they would not feel isolated or neglected. According to the WP6 on Inclusive Education, support for teachers and learners should be provided by the DBST.

The DBST is responsible for providing a coordinated professional support service to the schools, ILSTs, teachers and learners, however a lack of support was evident in the words of LST G: *“We need support from the district, if the district can be seen more frequently, if they can see that the district officials more frequently, jaa, and if people can be may be charged I don’t know how because they don’t take me seriously, things are done”*. The district is supposed to support teachers, but, according to the respondents this was not happening. Echoing the sentiments, LST G said: *“They don’t take this seriously, because the district itself*

don't take it seriously also, we only have one cluster meeting in three months and the last time we had a meeting of the SBST was second quarter last year [2009], we only had two for the whole year last year so there is no seriousness, even in the district there is no seriousness, even the district officials they only know us when they feel like they don't want to go somewhere, and then they will phone you and say go and do that for us, it's not fair". Analysis of the above statements reveals that the support for LSTs in this district is not meeting their expectations.

Most respondents concurred that they were not receiving adequate support from the districts in terms of collaboration within units in the districts. They said that different units in the district did not understand their role in schools, as stated by LST E: *"The problem is the other district official from the other units, they don't understand what we do at schools"*. LST A shared the sentiments: *"Officials that are not doing inclusion they don't even recognise us, they think we are not important like them."* LST D agreed: *"We need to have a meeting with district people so that we can explain what we do at schools, it seems they don't know and they don't even care"*. Similarly, for LST B: *"We don't even have an office at the district, how will they take us seriously? We are not one of them"*. All the above LSTs indicated that they were not recognised or acknowledged by district officials mainly from the other units, because they did not know or understand their roles in schools.

All respondents interviewed shared the view that teachers looked down on them and that other units in the district did not even acknowledge their existence. LST E voiced a particular concern: *"They will tell you that you are an LST, we are having the curriculum people who want the curriculum to be finished"*. This was affirmed by G: *"They will tell you when we are going to implement those strategies district curriculum people will want activities in a term"*. This indicates that IE was not being given the priority afforded the other activities in the school, so was not taken seriously. According to the teachers, they would rather do what the curriculum officials told them to do, and let inclusive education follow later.

Four of the LSTs agreed that support was necessary for teachers and learners for IE to succeed. They felt that LSTs were not receiving adequate support and they

were concerned that this was going to affect the implementation of IE as well as learners who were supposed to benefit from it and succeed in their academic careers. This was affirmed by the words of LST E: *We are dealing with the curriculum people and they are district officials and who need their work to be done in this way and then when you come with yours they put it aside, they do the work of people who are recognised who are known as district officials*". This was further stated by LST C: *"It is a challenge because district people also don't know because they are not supportive"*. In addition, LST F argued that: *"They can't waste time to teach a few learners, when the district comes, they monitor activities that are done in class so they want quantity not quality"*.

This reveals a weakness in the way monitoring and evaluation was being carried out at district level. The teachers were sceptical and felt that quality was being sacrificed to quantity that is, measuring how many activities the learners had done during a particular set time rather than assessing whether they had mastered the subject matter. From these responses it can be deduced that learners experiencing barriers were not being effectively attended to.

LST C said that: *"Reporting is not a regular thing, at times they ask for the report, at times they don't, at times we phone and tell them about the progress in our work, so nobody is responsible, there is a problem with the system"*. This statement confirms the findings in the interviews that the LSTs' work was not being monitored or evaluated, so they asked why they should they write reports. The above statement was affirmed by the documents analysed, that is the LSTs' weekly timetables.

From an analysis of the LSTs' weekly timetables, the following was revealed:

- LST A: Every week she planned ahead and informed the schools that she would be coming. The coordinator of the ILST prepared the learners and the teachers. She visited mostly two schools which were next to her house. This was evident from all her timetables, since the two schools were visited three times every month, whereas the others were visited once a month. This implies that the two schools were preferred to the others. It will be

interesting to see if all the schools receive the same number of visits from the LST. There was no evidence of a district official's signature or stamp to show that the timetables had been checked, meaning that the Inclusion and Special Schools (ISS) officials did not know where the particular LST was working at any time. This is contrary to what was stated in the WP6, namely that districts should evaluate through supporting teaching (DoE 2001a:47).

- LST G: Every week she sent her timetable to various principals of the schools she was serving. She adopted this strategy after realising that at the district level no one cared about her timetables. This indicates that the district needs to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation task. According to this LST it was not the case.
- LST E: She planned what she was going to do the following week, but that plan in most cases did not work because she dealt mostly with crisis management. She mentioned that the district people would call her to drop everything and attend to an emergency, in most cases social problems. One can conclude that the LSTs were acting as social workers for the schools.
- When analyzing the timetables of LST B, there was not one which indicated that the LSTs did plan ahead. When asked how she did her weekly planning she mentioned that she acted if she was called to a particular school because all her schools were far from each other and she had neither car nor money to travel to them. This shows that LSTs can be very ineffective if the district does not strengthen its monitoring and evaluation.
- Timetables for LST C were well written and placed in a file every week. She asked for signatures at every school to which she went, from the principal or the ILST coordinator, so that she had evidence to show whoever needed it, even though in her case no one had asked her to present that evidence, clearly showing the professionalism and commitment displayed by other LSTs who value and respect their work. If the district could value and respect these kinds of teachers then the implementation of IE would be more straightforward.

- LST D was inconsistent in the writing of her timetables. When her file was checked some of the weeks had been completed but others not. When asked if there was a specific reason for this she said that at first she had been motivated to do the planning but of late she did it only when she could, simply because no one looked at them, whether they were done or not. Districts should be consistent in their evaluation and monitoring procedures, otherwise the LSTs will do as they wish.
- In LST G's file was evidence of weekly planning, and although it was inconsistent it was well written for every school. When asked why her planning had not been done regularly she said that no one read it so there was no point in doing it. It was evident that the district was not fulfilling its monitoring or evaluation roles.

From all the documents analysed it is also clear that there was no uniformity in how the LSTs planned and reported, even though they were working in the same district. Furthermore, the finding reveals that inconsistency, with sometimes timetables being written and sometimes not. The district needs to strengthen its support strategies for inclusion to succeed. This finding from the documents was affirmed by the interviews below.

LST G said that *"We need support from the district, if the district can be seen more frequently, if they can see that the district officials more frequently here, jaa, and if people can be may be charged I don't know how because they don't take me seriously, things are not done"*. If a teacher does not treat the issue of inclusion seriously, action should be taken against that teacher, because if one is unable to identify a learner during that early age it might affect him or her for the rest of his or her life.

The Inclusive and Special Schools (ISS) unit, which is a part of the curriculum section at the district, exists to support teachers and learners who experience barriers to learning and development. However, according to the respondents this is not happening, LST A complained: *"they are not supportive, they are not monitoring us, and the only time when they need us is when they are having pressing issues"*. This was affirmed by C, who said: *"Those workshops they don't*

even come and observe what we are doing, we are all doing different things we don't know whether we are on the right track or not." This was echoed by LST C: *"I think if the district plays their role in implementing this inclusion because and involvement of the principals, you can see that it has weight?"* Because district personnel are well respected at the schools in Gauteng they can influence the teachers and the principals to practice inclusion. These statements and the discussion in this section confirm the inadequacy of the support offered by the districts, as the LSTs need to have continuous and effective support from the district.

5.7.5 Inappropriate planning on the district side

The LSTs complained that the expectations and demands placed on them were frustrating and confusing. There needed to be clear guidelines on how and where they should provide support. LST A expressed the need for clarity this way: *"We are expected to support from Grade one to Seven, though I was teaching in the Foundation Phase, but our support goes streamline to Grade Twelve, and it's very difficult to support all the schools. I have about seven schools to support"*. They need clarity on the boundaries regarding their work, which affects the implementation of IE if they are supporting learners from the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phases. The district calls them to intervene where they do not even have the skills to do so, for instance being required to teach Grade 10 learners how to read, where they will not apply the same methods as applied to the Foundation Phase. They become frustrated in such situations, as the training they received caters only for Foundation Phase, as LST C said: *"Because we are servicing many schools even with the assessment, some other time you will be called to high school to give support, so maybe the district will be the one which we can say maybe we belong to them, but those people will say no you do not belong to us"*. This calls for clarification on issues of boundaries for LSTs.

In addition, respondent A said: *"I am sure when we started this thing I was supposed to support FP [Foundation Phase] only, but we have find situation whereby a learner has already moved from FP to other phases with problems so I*

am also expected to come in with some kind of support even in high school you find a non-reader there, teachers don't know what to do, then I am called to say what can be done with this learner". The expectations placed on LSTs are not attainable, considering the abovementioned problems. The importance of planning on the part of the district is reiterated by this respondent, that if they had a better plan there would be clarity in servicing the schools. As it is now, LSTs are supposed to serve all the schools, but this is not possible.

5.7.6 Financial Support for Learning Support Teachers

On a personal level, LSTs highlighted lack of financial support as a challenge to the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng. From the analysis of data it is clear that each LST moved around five or more schools to support schools with learners experiencing barriers to learning, but no one was accountable for their expenses. They did not receive any financial assistance to perform their duties and used their own money for transport and for making calls to set up appointments to the different schools. LST F said that: *"They will tell you they don't have any cars so you must phone so and so, with whose money?"*

Transport also seems to have been a challenge as they were supposed to rotate among schools in order to assist other teachers and learners. LST F stated that she had to travel long distances but nobody took responsibility for her expenses: *"We go around schools in the townships with our own cars, we are supposed to use the Departments car, as it is now we are supposed to go for a workshop tomorrow but nobody wants to account for our transport money, ai there are so many challenges".* This was affirmed by LST B: *"I don't have the car to travel so I use my own money to travel, there is no travelling allowance. I use my cell phone to do official calls really it is so heavy".* This made their job more difficult as they felt isolated, neglected and alone: LST F said *"My main problem now, I don't have transport and I spend too much money on transport and I use my money. No one, no one is sponsoring me".* This indicates the commitment of LSTs to help learners experiencing barriers to learning. They take the risk and the responsibility of using their own money to travel to schools hoping that someone will one day realise that

they are doing a valuable job.

Districts should recognise that LSTs play a crucial role in the implementation of IE and need to be included in the budget, an issue raised by LST D: *“Okay, the first problem is finance because we are not budgeted I use my own money for transport, for the phone to liaise with other stakeholders, to travel to the workshops, I use my own money and it’s taxing for me”*. LST A mentioned that: *“yes and am using my own car, at times I have to speak to other schools whereby there is an emergency, I use my own phone and at the same time our level was never taken into consideration when the post was being established”*.

It is clear that this group of LSTs are frustrated because sometimes they have to use their own money to rotate to the different schools, without any compensation. That creates tension because it seems no one cares about them and that affects the implementation of IE and impedes performance.

5.7.7 Emotional Support for Learning Support Teachers

LSTs felt dissatisfied with their emotional support network, which often resulted in them suffering from stress. On visiting schools they were confronted with various problems, social, socio-economic and language-related, that the learners were experiencing, yet the LSTs were not given debriefing or emotional support. LST E said *“Sometimes when I have to support, I can’t give support because I become emotional and I feel like I can’t take this anymore, because sometimes I feel like running away from the problem, because they are too much and they are unsolved, they are so unsolved so it is better to like, even if I try, it becomes so difficult because they are so many that they are unsolved, so at times it’s better not to know”*. There is a need to for guidance and support as the problems in South Africa are unique, whether social, socio-economic or linguistic. This LST felt exhausted from the problems she had to face on a daily basis and which she found it difficult to solve.

After analyzing data it was clear that LSTs required debriefing as they were implementing IE at different schools, with many learners and diverse challenges,

according to the context of the school. This is evident in the words of LST B : *“Emotional support, why I say this because in my schools I deal with a lot of social problems, like incest, so sometimes I get attached to the learner or I make it personal”*. Findings of the interviews also indicated the importance of support in the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase, where there was no emotional support to help them cope with their daily experiences.

This was also evident during the observation of LST D. She cried when she explained some of her experiences regarding the learners problems and she explained her situation like this: *“More than and you know sometimes when I have to support, I can’t give support because I become emotional and I feel like I can’t take this anymore, because sometimes I feel like running away from the problem, because they are too much and they are unsolved, they are so unsolved so it is better to like, even if I try, it becomes so difficult because they are so many that they are unsolved, so at times it’s better not to know”*.

This clearly indicates the LSTs frustrations and the need for emotional support to help them cope with the problems that they experience on a daily basis.

5.7.8 Concluding remarks regarding matters pertaining to IE policy

From the above discussion it can be concluded that, the provision of adequate emotional support could encourage the LSTs to work more efficiently and productively. LSTs felt that to implement a new policy such as IE, policy supportive procedures need to be in place, including emotional support for the teachers so that they can implement the policy in the correct way. They should not feel that they are isolated or that no one cares what they are doing. Their feelings of isolation can be blamed on the immediate level that is responsible for supporting teachers, that is the DBST. It is crucial that LSTs themselves get the necessary support so that they meet their obligations, for if support is not provided it might affect the implementation of the policy negatively. The IE policy is developed at national level; in this section matters pertaining to policy are discussed. The abovementioned findings reiterate the strong relationship and influence of the various systems as set out by Bronfenbrenner.

5.8 DOMESTIC FACTORS OF LEARNERS

The research question that provided the data was: “What are the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase?” and it is evident that the learners’ domestic environments are responsible, because as discussed in Chapter 3, barriers to learning and development exist on two levels, that is within the system and within the learners.

5.8.1 Introduction

Performance of learners in the classroom suffers if their basic needs of food, shelter and parental care are not met. Most of the learners in this situation are depressed, their concentration span is low, they are tired, and they lack attention. Research has shown that a learner needs to be educated holistically, that is as a total person, overcoming any social, normative, physical, cognitive and affective factors that might make it difficult for him or her to learn. Teachers need to be alert to the needs that prevail in learners and address them as soon as possible. LSTs mentioned that in most cases these issues affect the implementation of IE. Learners learn better at school if their home environment is not presenting problems that will inhibit them. Some of the factors mentioned by LSTs are discussed in the next section.

5.8.2 Life experiences and the way LSTs reported them

LSTs are supporting teachers and learners who are from the communities or from the society, indicating that learners and teachers are social beings, and whatever happens in the communities can affect them directly or indirectly. It should be noted that even the LSTs mentioned that, as social beings, whatever affects teachers and learners will also affect the progress of implementing Inclusive Education. The experiences of learners differ according to their context, where they live and the kind of experiences they had in life. One of the documents analysed, namely the register for recording learners with barriers to learning, revealed the following:

LSTs also believed that some of the learners' negative life experiences, such as abuse, neglect, and chronic diseases, can have a significant impact on the implementation of IE, as learners may be unable to concentrate in class. In the following section the data which indicates the learners' negative life experiences is highlighted.⁴

- LST G had seven schools to support, documents for which she agreed I should analyse. At the first of these schools there was no evidence of records of learners experiencing barriers to learning. At the second school there were 10 learners in the register who were experiencing chronic diseases, abuse and neglect. The dates in the record book were recent (3-6, 10-14, 17-20 May 2010), but there were no dates for the first term. It was interesting to note that at the first school there was no evidence, but that suddenly there was evidence when I visited the second school, and this evidence was still new. From the third to the seventh school the information was all recent.
- LST A was rotating among six schools, but she had records for only two, those closest to her house, while the other four were 35 to 40 kilometres distant. On the records of school A there were 15 learners, with problems ranging from abuse, violence in the family, HIV/AIDS-related illnesses, neglect by parents and chronic illnesses, however none had a learning problem. The two schools benefitted greatly from her because the records also showed the intervention strategies used, how the learners were progressing and the final closure for that learner's case. This clearly indicates that LSTs are able to work if such issues as transport can be solved. She mentioned that because she struggled with transport to the other schools she was unable to support them as frequently as the other two. When asked whether she did support those schools she replied that she sometimes did but she was demotivated by district officials not even asking for the records.

⁴ The LSTs were assured that information on the documents would be handled very responsibly because of the sensitivity nature of the cases, and would be read only by the researcher, the supervisor and the LST concerned.

- LST C was rotating between five schools, but there were no records of evidence of learners experiencing barriers to learning. When asked how she knew which learners were experiencing barriers to learning at a particular school she said that she depended on information given by classroom teachers.
- LST D was rotating among six schools, with evidence of records of three schools. School A had 10 learners with social problems, such as incest, rape, violence and abuse, while School B had five learners with HIV/AIDS-related problems, abuse and poverty. School C had ten learners from poverty-stricken families, no parents or abuse. Intervention strategies were used to assist those learners, with records of the progress and the closure of the cases. When asked about the other three schools, she said that she was discouraged by principals who thought the LSTs were wasting their time, and said that while she supported the learners the principals were negative. Perhaps had the district intervened and told them that inclusion was necessary and were helping learners and teachers, they would have been happy when she went there.
- LST E was rotating among six schools and had evidence of three schools in her records. She had 10 learners at school A, who experienced reading, writing and spelling problems, while School B had five learners with social problems, violence and HIV/AIDS-related problems. School C had learners who experienced reading problems. When asked about the other schools she said that the ILST coordinator was the one who had the records and that when she was at that particular school she liaised with the coordinator.
- LST B was rotating among five schools. She did not have evidence of learners experiencing barriers to learning at the other four schools, and said that all the records were with the (Head of Department) HoD of the Foundation Phase of each school that she was supporting. She maintained that most of the learners she was dealing with were experiencing social problems more than learning problems, and agreed with the HODs of her schools. She found it difficult to carry all the files by herself as she had no car.

- LST F was rotating between six different schools, and like LST A she left her files at different schools, so she had evidence of only one school she was visiting when the data was collected. She also maintained that most of the learners referred to her were having underlying problems that made it difficult for them to learn. She maintained that as long as those underlying problems remained unsolved the learners would be unable to learn.

It is significant that most of the learners recorded in the LSTs' record books were not having learning problems. This clearly indicates that they mostly dealt with problems that were real life experiences of the learners. Those problems are real and should be solved as soon as possible when identified, or else they may affect the learners for the rest of their academic careers. Learners who experienced learning problems were only found in the records of LST E, which can be attributed to the fact that most of the schools were catering for learners from disadvantaged communities, with most of the parents not working.

LSTs are inconsistent in their recording of learners, sometimes keeping records and sometimes not. For those who had records it was noted that most would prefer the ILST coordinator or the HoD to keep them, because they were rotating among schools and without cars it was difficult to carry files.

It can be concluded that LSTs have realised that because the district is not providing the support, evaluation or monitoring, they neglect and ignore some of their responsibilities, and they know no one checks them. LSTs should keep the register so that, for example, they know at a particular school there are so many learners with barriers to learning and record their progress. If the district were playing their part and LSTs were consistent in using their record books to record learners, the intervention strategies would be used and closures brought to the cases.

LST A stated: "*Others are abused, others are raped, their social life is terrible, and so it affects their learning in the classroom*". This was affirmed by LST D: "*They are from poverty backgrounds, others are facing incest problems, whereby an uncle rapes them, parents are fighting*". From LST E: "*You are invited to help*".

schools not even with learning problems but with social problems". Learners who have negative life experiences have a barrier to learning, which in turn has an impact on how they learn. As such it becomes a challenge to the implementation of IE.

According to LST D, there was: *Poverty in learners, most of them come from disadvantaged homes, both parents are unemployed, and they stay far from the school, in shacks, they walk long distances to school, they come to school without eating, so such learners can't cope well in class*". This response shows that because most of the learners come from poverty stricken environments it makes the work of the LSTs difficult, because such learners' attention spans are usually poor.

With regard to the HIV/AIDS issues, LST G said: *"Yah, the learners most of them, you know this HIV problem has affected so many learners in our schools and you find that they live alone at home without an adult, learners are orphaned"*. It is evident that HIV/AIDS will touch or affect everyone indirectly or directly. If learners are staying alone at home, without any adult care, they will do as they please. There will be nobody supervising their homework or even identifying that they are experiencing problems.

One could argue that the DoE needs to find a way to deal with the negative life experiences affecting learners and contributing to the ineffectiveness of the implementation of IE. Life experiences can include issues such as poverty, abuse, violence, travelling long distances to school, staying with grandparents, HIV/AIDS and other illnesses. LSTs pointed out that the learners' experiences in their homes, society and school were having a profound impact on the implementation of IE and unless dealt with adequately, the vision would not be realised.

5.8.3 Lack of parental or caregivers' involvement

For the implementation of Inclusive Education to be successful, the partnership between the home, school and the learner is crucial, but due to the socio-economic status and unemployment most of the parents in South Africa leave the

children in the care of grandparents or siblings. Sometimes it is difficult for grandparents to take care of the wellbeing of those children, especially when they are illiterate and cannot help learners with schoolwork. The majority of LSTs felt that the lack of parental or caregivers' involvement in the learners' education was having a great impact on the implementation of Inclusive Education. If LSTs identify the needs of the learner as requiring a parent to be involved, it becomes a problem because even if they are called to school they do not attend. If parents and caregivers are not involved in activities of learners at school, learners' performance and confidence in the classroom can suffer, causing the learner to experience more barriers to learning. This was pointed out by respondent A: *"Some of the learners, their parents are not there, they are neglected"*. Parents or caregivers who neglect their responsibilities create a challenge for LSTs to fulfil their duties. The school should involve them as learning partners to play a role in the learners' education as this can result in a learner improving or even succeeding in his or her academic career. Schools can help parents to understand how their involvement can support the learners' performance in class through meetings and community gatherings.

Support the learners receive from home can contribute greatly to the learners' confidence and performance in the classroom. The following are some of the accounts given by LSTs as a challenge regarding factors of involvement of parents and caregivers that affect the implementation of Inclusive Education:

D: *"Most grandmothers are illiterate so they cannot help them with schoolwork."*

G: *"A learner would say, It's me and my siblings, where are your parents, we don't have a mother, it's only a father who works somewhere, I don't know where so now we can't get hold of the parents"*

E: *"Ha! This problem, I am not sure but the problem is with the parents, maybe the approach that was given to parents was wrong."*

B *"I am talking about those learners who live with grannies, the parents have passed away, yes we have got such learners at school."*

The statements indicate the frustration and helplessness of LSTs when they have to implement Inclusive Education without support from caregivers or parents. Parents and caregivers should be the ones who make sure that learners are supported when they have needs. It should be noted that in some cases learners are heading the families and it is difficult for them to parent themselves. In such households there is no one to give guidance to the learners.

Schools have to take a responsibility for making parents feel that they are accepted as partners in the education of their children. As such, the learners' confidence and performance in the classroom will improve because they realise that even their parents and caregivers are interested in their wellbeing.

This was evident also during the observation session of LST D (only LSTs' interactions with the learners were observed):

Sibusiso Ntsara was nine years old and in Grade two during the time of study. He was in the register of learners experiencing barriers to learning, and it was his fourth session with the LST. The classroom teacher referred him to the LST because he was sleepy in class, and when given homework it was never done. He was also late to school. The teacher tried to contact the parents several times but they never came. Sibusiso told the classroom teacher that he stayed with the grandmother and did not know his father. His mother stayed on a farm with her boyfriend and only came home at the end of the month.

When the session of LST E was observed, Prudence Kila was a seven-year old girl in Grade at the time of the study. The classroom teacher brought her to the LST because she had no uniform, and was often absent from school. She did not concentrate, was absentminded and sleepy during lessons, and when she played with the other learners she bullied them no longer had anyone to play with. The classroom teacher had evidence of having written several letters to the parents, but they did not come in to discuss Prudence's situation.

It is clear from the above incidences and reports of LSTs that parents were not supportive, therefore the teachers felt helpless. The goal of Inclusive Education might not be reached soon if parents are not working together with the teachers. It

is evident that parents are not supporting teachers and teachers feel helpless and frustrated when they invite parents to come to school to discuss the problems affecting their children.

When asked “*What is the biggest challenge in implementing Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase?*” classroom teachers mentioned parental support. Parents are the primary educators of their children and remain responsible for them throughout life. They therefore are the most important and enduring influence on their children’s development (Winkler 2004:25). Classroom teachers felt that parents were neglecting their responsibilities as primary educators, leaving them instead to the classroom teachers. This was clear from the words of CT2: “*Parents need to be taught how to parent their kids; you cannot bring a child in this world and then ignore your responsibility of taking care of that child*”. This was reiterated by classroom teacher CT3: “*If you call the parent to come and discuss the problem of the learner with you, the parent does not come, because they think you are going to tell them that their child is going to fail*”. Echoing the sentiments was CT7: “*Parents are not supportive; they don’t even come when you call them to the school, there are some problems which you cannot solve without the parents consent, so the issue of inclusion becomes irrelevant when we look at real practical issues*”. Parents should be supportive of classroom teachers, especially in solving problems of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. If parents take the responsibility for their children the classroom teachers will also be encouraged to support the learners because they know they also have the parents’ support.

Support of parents is regarded as the most important factor in the education of learners, for when parents know what is happening at schools they are able to support and motivate the learners to learn. Principals also raised parental support as an issue that made the implementation of Inclusive Education very challenging in the Foundation Phase. Respondent P1 was concerned about those parents who were not supportive on issues that needed parents to help learners: “*The area that is so depressing, parents drink, no parental guidance.*” Respondent P2 added that “*So parents in fact they don’t understand why their children must, underline must, must go to school, at some stage you visit their homes, yah you*

will see wonders". This was affirmed by respondent P3: *"You find that a parent goes to work and leaves the learner to look after his siblings, which means that they don't understand the seriousness of this education"*. Unemployment sometimes forces parents to leave and work somewhere far from home, so learners remain at home by themselves with no kind of support in their schoolwork, sometimes having to do homework on their own because there is no one at home to help.

For the successful implementation of IE, parents should also take their responsibilities seriously in supporting the learners at home. Parents can play an important role in making sure that Inclusive Education is beneficial to the learners, by knowing and assisting teachers where their input is expected. It is evident that principals of schools are also facing a challenge over parental involvement, making it difficult to help the learners because the parents are not supportive. This concern was also raised by the LSTs and classroom teachers.

5.8.4 Denial of parents

Learning Support Teachers find themselves in a situation where they are supposed to convince parents that learners experiencing barriers to learning are not bewitched but rather require support in areas with which they are struggling. From the data gathered in interviews it is clear that acceptance of differences in learners by parents plays a vital role in the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase. LST B indicated that: *"A parent will tell you that the child is bewitched when the child is unable to read, so you have to wait for her to take the child to the traditional healer so that they check who bewitched her, and that delays the child because you as an LST, you cannot use the intervention strategies, and they never came back and tell you the child is now all right you can start with your intervention strategies."* The sentiments were echoed by LST F: *"Most parents have a problem they think there is something happening like witchcraft if the learner can't cope in class"*. This was affirmed by LSTs A and D respectively: *"Really we are having a problem more especially with denial of parents"*; and *"parents don't want to accept that their kids have problems in class, they think kids are bewitched, they would rather take the learner to another school, because you*

said the learner is having a problem.”

LSTs mentioned that learners would migrate to the other schools if they were identified as having a problem, and parents would take them out of the school in which they were identified because they did not want to accept they had a problem. Since the LSTs were rotating in schools, the learner would be identified again in the next school, causing implementation problems as LSTs are unable to support the learner starting afresh at a new school.

Most principals indicated the denial of parents was very problematic in the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase, as learners were unable to get the required assistance as soon as they had been identified. The following comments were made by the respondents about the denial of parents:

P2: *“Usually they don’t accept the learners with barriers even the parent of those learners who have barriers those who have been discovered that they have got challenges; they usually don’t accept that, we have to educate those parents to accept the condition of the learner in order for that learner to get assistance”.*

P1: *“Parents’ view on learners who are having problems is skewed, they think you are saying their child is mad”*

P3: *“Main problem they don’t accept that the learners are having problems in learning [denial] and then they would say in other words you are telling me that my child is mad, of which we say no your child needs help”.*

P6: *“They understand that those schools they cater for mental, eeh I don’t know how to put it, they, so when we went there, they discovered that this is just a normal school and there are other learners of the same nature. The educators there are just like myself and you, they then started to understand the nature of that school”.*

P5: *“Denial, nobody wants to believe that my child cannot do it and they think that if you refer a child to a special school then it means my child is not a normal child is a cripple, they view it very negatively”.*

It is very important to note that the perceptions of parents about the learners experiencing barriers to learning can distort the whole idea of LSTs wanting to support learners. When learners are identified by teachers as having problems, parents deny it, so delaying the process of assisting the learners and reducing their chances of getting assistance. If the learner is not supported in the Foundation Phase the problem may affect him or her for the rest of his or her academic career. This same issue was also highlighted by the LSTs.

5.8.5 Socio-economic background of learners

Six principals strongly believed that the socio-economic background of learners can influence the successful implementation of IE in schools. They believed that learners from poor backgrounds were likely to experience barriers to learning because their basic needs were not being met, and so their performance in the classroom was suffering.

They expressed their ideas through these comments:

P2: *They are from the disadvantaged communities, informal settlement so they don't cope in class".*

P4: *"Problems they seem to emanate from the social background so they the LSTs usually give assistance in terms of that".*

P1: *"I once made home visits in one informal settlement, the learner came here to school in unacceptable conditions without shoes, dirty, and the hair was not combed, in fact she did not wash herself so I had to take the child back home, when I reached home it was just a small place with about four children".*

P2: *"The mother is unemployed, there is no father figure and the mother has just got a newly born baby, it was just a week so she does not have time to ensure that the kid comes to school ready for education".*

P5: *"They don't even have the ID. The parent does not have ID, the children do*

not have birth certificates and it's very difficult to access grants for them”.

P7: “The other one the child cannot read cannot write and the learner is Grade four, she is clumsy, untidy with no school uniform”.

It is evident from the comments above that there are different social factors that can be a barrier to learners, such as different socio-economic backgrounds. The problem is intensified when principals and teachers do not have the skills or knowledge to help those in need. If a learner's domestic environment is not conducive to learning it does not motivate the learner, who might experience barriers to learning and could make him or her have a short attention span in the classroom. As a result of all these factors, the implementation of Inclusive Education is held up.

According to the WP6 (2001a:16), some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support to develop their full potential. One principal (P1) said that: *“Learners who had been raped, abused , sometimes we don't even know what to do , where to start with the case, how do we handle the child, how do you ask the child, how do you handle the child so she always help us.”* The need to have specialist support was emphasised by these principals because sometimes they did not have the knowledge or skills to provide necessary support, thus defeating the idea of supporting learners with different kinds of barriers, as some were excluded.

Respondent P4 was of the opinion that: *“The social issues are not everybody that must come in, so if we have a person who deals with those problems it is better because all those learners will be referred to the specialist.”* Considering the shortage of specialists such as psychologists and social workers in the DoE, learners experiencing such problems do not easily get help, so the implementation of Inclusive Education is hampered, especially if learners are in need of the services of a specialist.

5.8.6 Social problems of learners

When asked to indicate how the LSTs were supporting them in the Foundation Phase, classroom teachers indicated that they helped deal with social problems of learners and employed intervention strategies. Classroom teachers who find themselves in situations in which they are supposed to intervene in social problems, such as abuse and/or violence, are sometimes unable to assist because they do not know what to do. As such they are helpless and frustrated by the situation, as made clear by CT2: *“Most of our learners experience problems whereby parents always fight, and the learner is always thinking about what is happening in the house so they do not even hear what you are teaching in class, so the LST come and talk to those learners”*. The problem is intensified when classroom teachers are not sure how to intervene, CT6: *“Yes, in some cases you find that the learner is bullying others, you need to refer that learner to the counsellor. Learners who are naughty stealing others possessions, then you will find that those learners may not get love from home, so LSTs helps us there, because we don’t know what to do in such cases”*. From the statements above, one can conclude that the LSTs are mostly required to resolve social problems that the classroom teachers are unable to handle. This affirms what was said by the both the LSTs and principals.

5.8.6 Parents should be informed about Inclusive Education

It is significant that one principal, P4, suggested informing parents as a strategy to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education: *“Parents should from time to time be informed around the question of IE”*. Parents may not become involved because they do not feel there is anything they can offer the schools, or maybe they do not understand how it can change the lives of learners. Therefore, schools should find creative ways to include parents in schools activities, and so improve learners’ performance and confidence.

Respondent P6 reported that: *“At some stage we did visit the special school together with the parents of those learners whom we were going to refer. They*

find that the situation was very conducive for teaching and learning for those learners. They were so much excited, is just the perception.” It is thus evident that parents were not receiving the correct information about IE, and so were reacting negatively to inclusion.

For Principal P6, having an LST at the school helped greatly because he could give the parents the relevant information about IE: *“The LST, they usually help us when we invite the parents of identified learners in order to teach them”*. This statement strongly affirms the importance of training for successful implementation, with adequate and relevant information vital.

5.8.7 Concluding remarks regarding domestic factors of learners

Evident from the discussion in section 5.8 is the importance of the home environment in influencing the way the learner performs at school. If the learner experiences no support from the home, he or she might experience barriers to learning, which will then delay the implementation of IE. This affirms Bronfenbrenners’ ecological theory, that emphasises that one needs to understand the influences of the home environment of the learner, to understand why he or she might be experiencing problems. Micro-systems are the immediate environments in which an individual develops, characterised by those individuals and events closest to one’s life; therefore the home as the micro-system should provide the appropriate support.

LSTs are experiencing frustration, helplessness and confusion because they cannot fulfil their duties without the consent or support of the parents and caregivers, and the learner who is supposed to receive help is no longer doing so because of the parents’ beliefs. LSTs have to wait until the parents tell them to continue with the intervention strategies.

5.9 CLASSROOM FACTORS

The research question that provided the data was: “What are the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase?” and it is evident that the classroom factors can have an impact on the implementation of IE, as discussed in Chapter 3. Barriers to learning and development exist on two levels, that is, within the system and within the learners.

5.9.1 Introduction

There are some factors in the classroom that can eventually make it difficult for the LSTs to implement IE. They indicated that their greatest challenges in the classrooms were overcrowding, the attitude of classroom teachers towards learners experiencing barriers to learning and development, and inappropriate language of learning and teaching (LOLT).

5.9.2 Overcrowded classrooms

Teaching and learning will not take place as planned if there are too many learners in a classroom, as identified by LST F: *“They will tell you they don’t have time to help learners with problems, they have got so many learners”*. Overcrowded classrooms result in teachers neglecting the learners who really need help, and they only move with those learners who are able to grasp the concepts more easily. In addition, LST E pointed out that: *“It is not easy to say, how it can be done as I said there are many excuses, number of learner’s, overcrowding in the classes they could not attend to one learner, instead of teaching forty-five or fifty learners”*. This indicates that teaching methodologies need to be adapted in order to accommodate those learners who have problems, thus showing a need to retrain classroom teachers on the inclusion policy, which at the moment is being interpreted incorrectly.

The sentiments were echoed by respondent D: *“If we have small number of learners in a class, so that maybe the end product will be what is expected*

because of the greater number in classes is not easy to implement I.E.” This respondent expressed the need to have fewer learners in class so that the implementation of Inclusive Education could be successful. In a similar vein, LST A said that: “They are expecting me to move around the schools, yaah, for instance I have fifteen schools under my care right now”. LST C shared a similar view: “I am a teacher supporting Foundation Phase schools in a township but there is overcrowding there of which is not going to go away any time soon, so if really I have to give support to a learner as individual attention the word again doesn’t imply meaning in that situation individual attention is never you know practicable in a situation of overcrowded classroom”.

From the statements above it is evident that when there are too many learners in a classroom the teachers finds it difficult to identify those who are experiencing barriers to learning. When the LSTs visit the school they are told that there are no learners who experience barriers to learning, whereas there are learners who are having problems but are not being identified. As discussed in Chapter One, LSTs can only intervene after the teacher in the classroom has identified a learner with a specific barrier. This is a challenge to the LSTs because if the classroom teachers are not identifying the learners with barriers to learning and development then they will not know they are having a problem. The learner will progress to the next grade but if still not identified it becomes a recurring process until the last grade, Grade 12, senior certificate, when it is too late to intervene. Learners should thus be identified early in the Foundation Phase if such problems are to be avoided.

Respondent D added: *“If I had to say that and also some issues is about material resources like for instance, more especially, I am a teacher supporting Foundation Phase schools in a township, but there is overcrowding, there of which is not going to go away any time soon, so if really I have to give support to a learner as individual attention the word again doesn’t imply meaning in that situation, individual attention is never, you know, practicable in a situation of overcrowded classroom.”* If there are too many learners in the classroom, provision should be made for additional personnel to assist.

All principals interviewed agreed that large classes delayed the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase, because learners who are experiencing barriers to learning were not easily identifiable. This was evident in the words of P2: *“The teachers will tell you, how I am going to identify a learner who has problems out of fifty five learners?”* This was affirmed by respondent P2: *“I understand that now we must have a strategy of how to do deal with those learners in class, I don’t want to tell lies, when you look at the fifty eight and you look at the content focus that you must focus on, then you run with the fifty eight, you forget about the one.”* In addition, respondent P3 said: *“Our biggest problem is overcrowding.”* The problem of overcrowding was further highlighted by respondent P5: *“If in Grade One there are five learners, Grade Two, Ten, in my class four it’s more of forty learners that need her attention to assist, because when I say she must be here to assist”.* There are not enough classes to accommodate learners in Gauteng schools, and an influx of people from all the nine provinces to Gauteng to look for work compounds the problem. When parents leave their provinces they usually bring the children to Gauteng, contributing to the schools being overpopulated. This is a crisis for schools and for the country, for which ways to address should be found. The aspect of overcrowded classrooms was also mentioned by LSTs.

When asked what experiences they had in the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase, all classroom teachers indicated that the largeness of class sizes was making the implementation difficult, as clear in the following statements:

CT1 *“I have too many learners in my class, when do I find time to concentrate only on one learner who has a problem?”*

CT4: *“It is not easy to implement these inclusion thing, because, you can see how many learners I am dealing with, this individual attention is not possible with so many learners. We are trying to accommodate the learners who are struggling, but there are too many learners in class, so you end up doing only what you can”.*

CT5: *“We have too many learners in classes; I don’t know how they expect us to*

perform miracles with such big classes”.

The statements above indicate that the classroom teachers were frustrated by the large numbers of learners in the classes, and therefore found it difficult to attend to those with barriers to learning individually. This affirms the findings from the LSTs and principals that if there are many learners in the classes the classroom teachers find it difficult to attend to those experiencing barriers to learning.

5.9.3 Classroom Teachers’ attitude towards learners experiencing barriers to learning and development

In a study conducted by Bothma, Gravett and Swart (2000:201-202), into the attitudes of primary school teachers towards inclusive education, the findings revealed that they were negative. An inclusive classroom should demonstrate a value system, with all learners in the system accepted, regardless of their learning needs, and so be a place in which all learners feel accepted and not judged. Teachers who demonstrate accepting attitudes are more likely to promote social justice, a healthy environment to learn and human rights. They have a responsibility to demonstrate to learners that they can feel safe and develop a sense of belonging, by modelling a positive attitude towards learners with barriers and among their peers, the learners and parents.

During the research, teachers’ attitude was raised as another factor that affects the implementation of IE. Respondent G said that: *“If you explain to the teachers the steps that I use, they will tell you that they don’t have time to do that. I’ve got so many learners I have to attend to and the class can’t stand and waste time only to teach a few”*. This was affirmed by E, who said that: *“We design an IEP (Individual Education Plan) you will find that the programme was left there on top of the cupboard with dust on it, no support from teachers, it was not even tried to see if that learner can be helped, so it means those strategies of yours will end up in that paper”*. In addition, Respondent A said *“... then you can give that work some are willing to try it, you know teachers in fact it goes per individual some are happy to do it, some says no it work some says I don’t have time you know*

teachers". This indicates that the attitudes of classroom teachers need to change so that they work collaboratively with the LSTs.

It is frustrating for the LSTs to develop programmes for learners identified as experiencing barriers to learning. They have individual education plans developed for them but the classroom teachers are not making use of these to help learners. LSTs mentioned that the classroom teachers leave those programmes on top of tables to collect dust, indicating the teachers' attitudes towards learners with barriers to learning and development. If teachers became aware of how their attitudes affect the learning and development process they would be able to change the way they view the learners. Teachers need to change their mindset, have a passion for helping learners who experience barriers to learning, and be willing to change their methods of teaching so that IE can be implemented successfully. This opinion was affirmed by the following statement: A: *"You know I think before it can fully be implemented hundred percent we should have to deal with those attitudes, I will say attitudes and fear is maybe and how do you do that"*. Teachers' attitudes have a significant impact on the implementation of IE because they are the ones who are supposed to be the critical agents in the implementation of the policy. If their attitudes are not positive towards IE the goals will not be reached, with negative consequences for the learners who are supposed to benefit from this policy.

5.9.4 Inappropriate language of teaching and learning

When asked about the factors that affect the implementation of IE, LSTs mentioned the LOLT as one. They strongly believed that learners in the Foundation Phase who are taught in a language that is not their mother tongue may appear slow, and are often unable to follow instructions because they are confused about the meaning. They do not cope with their schoolwork, as was clear in the words of respondent C: *"Sometimes the teachers label a learner that he has a barrier only to find that a teacher is Zulu and a learner is Pedi, so it's obvious the learner will not understand her"*. Respondent A added that some learners were foreigners and it was difficult to communicate with them: she said:

“We have the learners, I usually call them hmmm our cousins from the north, those people who come from Maputo, you know, their language is Shona and some is French and they are here in our schools for the first time and learning Zulu guys’ language, yes I am aware he is able to learn but the language is holding him back”. This implies that for much of the time such learners are labelled as ‘slow learners’, and sometimes this might contribute to the perceptions that there are many learners in the classes who are experiencing barriers to learning.

Respondent D affirmed that: *“Is not that the learner is retarded or something language breakdown he can’t carry out instructions because he can’t hear you, he can’t understand what you are saying, now at times I will try to talk to them with gestures (showing) sit down” hlala phansi” can you imagine “bala” you know it is so frustrating and now it becomes even worse you find that these learners has other problems besides language it will take time to pick them up”.* This indicates that a learner can be identified as having a barrier to learning if the teachers do not recognise the mother tongue of the learner; thus creating a challenge to LSTs in the implementation of IE because then the teachers refer all those learners to them, saying they are having a learning problem. In such instances the real problem might be that the learners are unable to follow the teacher’s instruction, because the teacher is not using her or his mother tongue.

Respondent A supported the sentiments above when she said: *“Whereby I said most of the LOLTs, language of teaching and learning, the school is totally different from the learner home language, yes, and usually the parent would prefer this school because they say it is near home, not taking into consideration whether is a Zulu school, you find Pedi in a Zulu”.* The majority of the learners who are regarded as having barriers to learning are actually taught in a language that is not their mother tongue, which creates problems because they cannot even understand instructions. This was affirmed by LST E, when she said: *” Yaah, you see the problem of language is that schools find themselves forced by policy to say they cannot refuse to register learners who are Sotho speaking when they are in the very same vicinity and then they need to accept those learners and make sure that when they reach a certain number they can apply for human resources so that they can be able to teach those learners their language and those parents*

always say that the learners are still young they will cope they will learn Zulu, he plays with Zulu kids, sometimes parents have different languages also, the father speaks Tsonga, the mother speaks Xhosa and now the child must come to a Zulu school, it's confusing for the child, so these are the problems we come across". As such, learners are unable to learn because they do not understand the teacher. This was also evident during my observations in the sessions where LSTs were supporting learners:

Session 1, LST A

Thulisile Maphanga was a nine-year old girl in Grade two, who had been referred to the LST's office because the classroom teacher identified her as a learner who was always quiet in the classroom and did not participate in classroom activities. The parents had come to South Africa in search of work. According to the teacher, she did not answer questions or follow instructions. She was from Mozambique and at home only spoke Shona. The language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the school was Setswana, which she did not know. When the LST asked her to write her name in the book she just looked at her and kept on biting her nails, leading to the conclusion that she did not understand the instruction. The LST asked the teacher if Thulisile had any siblings at school, and the teacher called his brother in Grade four to translate the instructions for her. Thulisile was able to follow instructions when her brother was translating the LST's instructions, and she could then write her name and surname.

This clearly affirms the findings during the interviews that classroom teachers sometimes identify learners as having barriers to learning, without considering that the LOLT of the school can be a contributory factor to the learners' misunderstanding the instructions. Therefore, classroom teachers need to be aware that there are learners who are perceived as experiencing barriers whereas they may just be disadvantaged because of language.

5.9.5 Assistance with intervention strategies

The following question about the LSTs was posed: *“Do you think it is necessary to have a Learning Support Teacher at your school?”* This question was specifically asked to elicit the viewpoints of the classroom teachers regarding the necessity of having LSTs. They said it is necessary because sometimes they did not know how to help learners who experience barriers to learning, but LSTs help them with the intervention strategies. Classroom teachers sometimes find it difficult to address the barriers to learning that are experienced by learners in their classes, and so they rely on the assistance of the LSTs. This is clear from the following statements:

CT2: *“Sometimes we want to help but it is not easy when you do not know how to help, so the intervention strategies help us a lot”.*

CT6: *“They actually try and assist learners as well as the educators with programmes that is creating programs for those learners who lack behind in their work and things like that, so those programmes you find that some teachers did not know them”.*

CT3: *“If it was not of the strategies that she helps us with; many learners will be dropouts as we speak”.*

It is clear that LSTs are assisting in the development or designing of intervention strategies for learners experiencing barriers to learning. One cannot overemphasise that they are a valuable resource to the schools. Classroom teachers indicated that large classes, lack of parental support, training for classroom teachers, social problems of the learners and assistance with intervention strategies were making the implementation of IE by the LSTs problematic.

5.9.6 Concluding remarks regarding classroom factors

Overcrowded classrooms, classroom teachers' attitude and the LOLT were some of the factors highlighted by the LSTs as having a negative impact on the implementation of IE, which could explain why it is not being implemented in the way hoped for. Too many learners in the classroom can make the teacher's task difficult, especially when they need to accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning; therefore classroom teachers exclude those learners in teaching and learning activities. The study also found out that the classroom teachers' attitude towards learners experiencing barriers to learning can contribute to the unsuccessful implementation of the policy and therefore cause the learners to perform poorly in their classroom activities.

Furthermore, with the LOLT identified by the LSTs as a barrier to the implementation of IE, learners whose mother tongue is not the same as that of the teacher are thus disadvantaged because they are excluded from the teaching and learning activities as they are unable to understand the teachers' instruction. Teachers need to acknowledge that learners who are speaking a different language from the teacher are not really slow learners, but merely do not understand the language and concepts. Therefore, the concepts should be explained in the mother tongue before moving to another language. The successful implementation of IE requires learners to be taught in their mother tongue, especially in the Foundation Phase before moving to a language the learner does not understand.

It is important for classroom teachers to identify learning barriers related to the classroom so that they do not misdiagnose learners, especially in the areas of language. Providing learners with a good base, especially in the Foundation Phase, and teaching them in the language that they understand, could eliminate some of the problems experienced in schools.

5.10 MANAGEMENT FACTORS

This section discusses factors related to management that can be a barrier to the implementation of Inclusive Education.

5.10.1 Introduction

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory demonstrates how the micro-system, for example the school, is interwoven with the exo-system (provincial department), the meso-system (the district), and macro-system (DoE), and how these are interrelated and affect each other. This may include factors that can directly influence the effective implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase by LSTs. It may include appropriate training of LSTs (pre-service and in-service), community and parental involvement, professional advice and referral services, participation of persons with disabilities, assistant teachers, provision of mobility and teaching aids, financial support, efficient leadership, assistance in curriculum adaptations and government and legal support (Arbeiter & Hartley 2002:63). The findings in this study reiterate Bronfenbrenner's theory and support the literature on issues related to the management factors to be discussed in detail in the following sections.

5.10.2 Education officials not being conversant with Inclusive Education policy

The nature of the training provided to national, provincial, and district and classroom teachers determines whether the implementation of IE will be successful. According to respondent F: *"Officials do not know what we are doing, they ask us to write what we do, they are the people who are supposed to know what we are doing"*. This indicates that there is a need to retrain officials about how best to support the implementation of policy. If the officials who are supposed to lead the way and provide guidance to the teachers and principals are not sure how best the learners with barriers can be supported and accommodated, this is problematic.

One respondent (LST B) mentioned that no one seemed to know how the policy should be implemented by the LSTs: *“There are no guidelines, policies that govern this LST thing; seemingly everyone is subjective about how to handle this thing.”* This was affirmed by respondent G: *“Ever since 2006 we have been promised this and that, last year we were promised that by the end of the year we will have our own policy that will guide us but up to this day we don’t have it so its, promises, promises that are not fulfilled, hence I say I want to quit.”* It should be noted that there is a need to develop proper guidelines on how the LSTs should implement IE, and without them they do not know whether what they are doing is right or wrong, which impacts negatively on the implementation of policy.

The study found that recognition and belonging were serious challenges to the implementation of IE, with LSTs emphasising that they were unsure whether they belonged to the school or to the district. This suggests that the education managers should be orientated to the roles of the specialist teachers, as stipulated in White Paper Six. The following statements reflect frustration, confusion and uncertainty about recognition and belonging:

E: *“We don’t know where we belong, and that makes us some other time to say you are in school monitoring, whereas you are not there the belonging issue again”*

B: *“Recognition from the district, or not from the district but from the Head office.”*

C: *“We are school-based but also we belong to the DBST but I am not sure where we belong.”*

F: *“We are not in the schools, we are in between, we are not sure where we belong because when we need some resources nobody wants to account for that, the district say go to the school, the school say no go to the district.”*

A: *“Another thing is that of belonging it haunts us because when you want this somebody says go to this one and the other person says go to the other one”*

Respondent C said that LSTs were the people responsible for the practical implementation of policy, but when decisions were taken about issues that

affected them they were not consulted, as clear in the words of LST G: *“I think if the head office or the people who are more vested in IE can involve those who are on the grass roots because the way I see it, it’s only head office and district who take decisions, but the people who are hands on, those who are practically implementing are left out, are not empowered and are not capacitated”*. The LSTs strongly believed that if they were involved in making decisions about policy issues, most of the problems they were experiencing could have been avoided. This implies that the decision-making body needs to re-examine their strategies for involving LSTs.

The interviews further revealed that the training of principals was vital for the successful implementation of IE. The principal has a significant influence on the classroom teachers as the head of the school, in many cases being respected by the teachers, and if he or she supports and practices inclusion the teachers will follow suit. LSTs voiced the following concerns about the principals:

D: *“Some principals are still difficult; they do not understand this inclusion thing.”*

B: *“We must workshop them to understand the WP6 because maybe they are doing it because they don’t understand it and the teachers also they must be work-shopped.”*

C: *“I think if the management can be empowered about IE and know more about it so that is like a Bible.”*

These LSTs agreed that if the principals were trained in IE it would be easier for to implement the policy at schools. It would show them that the principals valued what they were doing in the schools.

The importance of retraining principals is clear in the following from respondent C: *“Advocacy, Advocacy, Advocacy, because at times we think people know about a thing and when you come in say we have thought about it but you know the first time when I went to school we came into the office and we talk about WP6 after ‘blah blah for about twenty minutes. The principal asked ‘what is WP6?’ So I think we need more people to come and educate our schools about IE. You know we*

start with the teaching of this and why do we have it and why are we supposed to be part of it. I think now people will start embracing it you know they feel this misconception when you say inclusion then start off thinking of learners who are physically, severely, mentally retained, you know that's all they have in their minds and you know that's when they start losing interest because they felt that there is a place where these learners can be kept". Without realising it, education managers can become barriers to the implementation of IE if they do not have the knowledge, attitudes or skills to work with learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Respondent D spoke of the absence of guidelines as another challenge, creating problems for the implementation of IE: *"as we speak right now, there are no guidelines policy that governs this LST thing and seeming as if everyone is subjective about how to handle this thing, if comes maybe a supervisor from the office he will think is right to do this with a learner support and you know one comes is totally different from what we did with the other one. I think we need that recognition whereby we meet and do some guidance for us, secondly maybe if they may give us some resources".*

The problem is compounded by personnel from the district who should be leading the process of implementing IE, but according to the LSTs are not. That district personnel seem unaware of how they must handle the implementation of IE was clear in the words of respondent E: *"You must still empower them with knowledge. It should be addressed and their fears also, because at times we lack knowledge, so if we are being empowered you can handle issues differently".* It is very frustrating for LSTs to find that top management are unsure how LSTs function.

5.10.3 Training for classroom teachers

Classroom teachers were asked the question: *"In your opinion what will make you implement Inclusive Education better?"* They indicated that they need to be well trained in how to deal with learners experiencing barriers to learning. Literature reveals that, in Inclusive classrooms, teachers require diverse knowledge and

skills (Borman & Rose in Rose 2010:11). Most of the classroom teachers interviewed indicated that they need intensive training in Inclusive Education so that they would be able to support the learners in their classes. The classroom teachers were frustrated by situations that they were unable to handle, such as abuse. They mentioned that they wanted to help those learners but they did not know how, as was clear in the following statement from CT4: *“Sometimes you find that you suspect a learner in your class has been abused, how do you then talk to that learner? Seriously you need skills to do that without offending the learner”*. The frustration was compounded when the LST is still rotating in the other schools, CT5: *“The problem is that when the LST is still rotating in the other schools, if your turn for that week has passed you will see her maybe after two weeks, so what about the poor learner? It means she must wait until she comes back, so it’s better if we are trained also that we can help during emergencies”*. In addition, the classroom teacher mentioned only having been trained once in Inclusive Education, CT6: *“We went for training only once, we need more training on this inclusive education so that we can implement it correctly, for now what we are doing is just trial and error”*. The statements above affirm that classroom teachers do not have appropriate skills and knowledge to implement Inclusive Education. There is a desperate need for more intensive training so that the classroom teachers can be confident in supporting learners with barriers in their classes.

5.10.4 Training for principals in Inclusive Education

In Chapter One it was argued that in South Africa many teachers in-service have not had the benefit of being trained to teach learners who experience barriers to learning in their initial training, making it difficult for classroom teachers to support them. This was further emphasised by principals who felt that intensive training of principals and teachers was one strategy that could enhance the successful implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase. According to the principals, without regular training, principals and teachers would be lost, because they did not know whether they were doing the correct thing. They considered themselves as critical

elements in the implementation of policy; therefore they needed to have the skills and knowledge for implementing the policy on Inclusive Education. The following are some of the principals' comments:

P1: *"Workshops, seminars on regular basis so that educators that it is not isolated. If I had the money I will take all my teachers to register IE, not only from Department but also a buy in from educators to study IE"*.

P5: *"So you find that sometimes we don't even fill in this support forms because we don't know exactly what are we supposed to fill in."*

P3: *"Teachers need to be trained, because we were never trained in these Inclusive Educations, we are only told there is inclusive, you must do this and that and you find that we don't have that passion because we do not know how to deal with these children"*.

P4: *"As principals we need training, we really need training on this really because we talk inclusion, inclusion means different things, different problems that needs to be addressed, how as a principal am I going to know how the teachers must support the child in class, the teachers have those different learners in different classes not that SBST coordinator must be knowledgeable I think all educators"*.

It is clear that there is a call for training in IE. If the principal who is the leader or the head of school is not conversant with the policy the question arises as to how she or he will support the idea of Inclusive Education. Principals are lost and frustrated when they are supposed to advise teachers on filling out the support forms, because they were never trained. Thus, there is a high need for training.

Respondent P3 pointed out a strategy to enhance implementation of Inclusive Education as training of the support staff: *"Administrators are the face of the schools, so they should be work shopped around the question of inclusivity"*. The statement was supported by respondent P1: *"General workers are not so much involved, they should know about Inclusive Education."* Echoing the sentiments was respondent P2: *"A school is, the core business of the school is teaching and learning because we want to enhance the performance of learner but should not*

work in silos with our admin silos with our admin staff.” Inclusion of support staff in the implementation of IE was also affirmed by respondent P4: *“Everyone should be able to answer questions about IE or anything that is happening”*. This indicates a need for training on IE for every person employed by the school, so that people from outside it should not be given the wrong information.

5.10.5 Functionality of the School Based Support Teams

When respondents were asked to indicate what would enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education, they emphasised the functionality of the School Based Support Team (SBST). As indicated in Chapter Three, Inclusive Education and a training system should be organised so that they provide various levels of support to learners and educators. Furthermore, the key function of the SBSTs is to support all learners and teachers by identifying support needed and designing programmes to address the challenges experienced by teachers (DoE 2001a:19). Interviews revealed that the SBST lacked the knowledge and skills to assist learners and teachers in that regard, so having a functional SBST could be one strategy to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education.

There is a strong belief that if the SBSTs are functional at schools then inclusion will work, as was clear from Respondent P1: *“If SBST is functional then IE will work, because the SBST it receives or it gets all the conditions that needs to be addressed but basically the schools, for example the learners they get the food, if they don’t receive it at home, number two the issue of uniform, number three the socio-economic factors that affect the child, they do some workshops for educators we usually gives them a slot during the parents meeting just to indicate or show the seriousness or importance of education”*. Indeed, principals indicated the importance of the SBST being functional for the successful implementation of Inclusive Education. This was indicated by respondent P2: *“The SBST if functional, that is a step towards the implementation of IE you can hear from what I have already said”*. He mentioned that having functional SBSTs would be a step towards the implementation of IE.

On the other hand, respondent P3 mentioned that: *“SBST sometimes doesn’t have time to address all the schools problems at once because now we want everything to go forward and it is already late but if the SBST is utilised correctly I think inclusion will work”*. According to this principal, inclusion would work only if the SBST was utilised correctly. The teachers do not refer learners who experience barriers to learning to the SBST until late in the year. He believed that if teachers could report problems as soon as they were identified, and not wait until it was too late, then the SBST would be able to intervene.

Also mentioned in Chapter Three, classroom teachers at schools are required to identify and deal with the learners’ problems first, then if they persist the learner should be referred to the Institution Level Support Team (ILST). Classroom teachers seem to lack the knowledge and skills to identify learners with barriers to learning and this has an impact on the implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase. Teachers referred the learners without adequate documentation or evidence that the teacher had tried to support the learner before bringing the learner to the SBST. That is clear from this statement by P7: *“How do you then refer a learner if you don’t know the shortcomings? You should have evidence that you identified the shortcomings of the learner you have done something about it in terms of support you also have spoken to the SBST committee, you also speak and a mediate the matter parent, then that way, the implementation will run smoothly”*. The SBST is available to support learners and teachers, but according to the statements above, the SBST cannot do it alone. Classroom teachers need to work together with the team, so that in turn the SBST can help them. Supporting learners should not be seen as the responsibility of the SBST alone as members of the SBST also have their own classes to support. For the sake of successful implementation of Inclusive Education, SBSTs should work together with the teachers, principals and all stakeholders involved in education.

5.10.6 Strengthening support for Learning Support Teachers

Principals were asked how they supported LSTs at their schools. In their responses they emphasised the importance of doing so because they needed

them at their schools. From the comments of the principals it is clear that LSTs were doing a good job at the school but could not help them with some of their needs, because of budgetary constraints and not being sure where they belonged. Strengthening support for the LSTs was one of the strategies identified to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education. These are some of the comments:

P1: *“LSTs are helping us a lot, and what I have realised is that no one is including them in their budget, you see, the problem is that they rotate in many schools and which principal is going to be responsible for their transport to rotate, the district must come clean on this one otherwise we will lose the and the learners will suffer”.*

P3: *“In fact we don’t assist them in terms of their own personal needs, we turn a blind eye but we assist them by giving them the challenges that the learners have, in their learning number 2 the challenges that we as educators we don’t have that skill in assisting those learners and our doors are always open for them to come with the necessary support and their intervention strategy”.*

P5: *“In fact we are working very well with the support teacher, they are district based right, but I am not sure who is supposed to do her IQMS, you see because her key performance areas are not like the teachers in class, now the district sometimes tell them go to your principals for IQMS, but you find that sometimes is more than six principals, how should we do it?”*

P4: *“Not much really, except that we give them these problems say please do your best help us, we normally do not help them, we expect them to help us, the only help we can give is the monitoring assistant, you know run to the district and do this but with budgetary constraints cause the school is a no fee school and the government allocation doesn’t give you any money for transport, we have to sell kip kip (pop corn) in order to raise money for transport, sometimes she needs money for transport and then you find that the school doesn’t have the money for transport and these funds that you get from government you cannot take and use them for transport, otherwise you go for disciplinary hearing because you have to account for such funds.”*

From these comments it is clear that LSTs are a valuable resource to schools and they need to be supported. Parental support, large classes, denial of parents, social backgrounds of learners, training in IE, informing parents about IE, functionality of the SBST and strengthening the support for the LSTs were identified by principals as necessary for the successful implementation of IE by LSTs in the Foundation Phase.

5.10.7 Job dissatisfaction of Learning Support Teachers

From the interviews it is clear that the status of LSTs poses a serious threat to the implementation of IE. In this case the LSTs were unhappy about their status and their post level. During the time of the study they fell into the lowest category of teachers, being paid the lowest salary, on par with newly employed teachers. That created tension, because they felt that their skills and experience were not being acknowledged. When they visited schools they were not taken seriously because of their post level, as stated by respondent E: *“Especially because we are post level one so they feel that they don’t need to listen to us, that’s why they are having that attitude again of saying who are you to tell us what to do and when to do it?”* This was affirmed by the words of LST D: *“As it is now we are on post level one, but now we are supposed to go there and address principals and deputy principals, they don’t even look at us at times because of the post level one”*. This makes the LSTs very uncomfortable and unhappy, and discourages them from performing to their highest ability. Most were concerned that people do not take instructions from them because they do not have authority. LSTs felt that their post level disadvantaged them when trying to command authority in school, and it did not match the work they were doing. This was also evident from the following statements:

B: *The post level is very low for the work that we are doing”*

G: *“One other thing, as a mere teacher, there is the HoD, Deputy Principal, who am I to tell the HoD, do this, that’s when attitudes will surface.”*

E: *“The post level, moving from one school to another with our own cars, our own petrol, the belonging issue.”*

C: *“Unlike if it is said by me, I am post level one, it doesn’t have weight, I will listen to what I want to listen.”*

The statement of the LSTs affirms the words of respondent D when she said: *“I am a post level one educator, how can they expect my seniors to take instructions from me?”* From the words of this LST it is clear that there is an inferiority complex because they are on post level one, and so are ranked on the lowest level of teachers. They are thus in the lowest paid bracket of teachers, yet they have skills, experience and qualifications that many teachers do not have.

The problem is becoming worse when LSTs are supposed to address their seniors, as expressed by respondent A: *“I am still post level after twenty years of being in the field, it was never taken into consideration even the experience I have. I think for a full day about that. I talk about recognition whereby they can at least evaluate our post level from our post level. I don’t know to which post level but not post level, for goodness sake, you know the reason why. I am expected to address issues in a school whereby there is line functioning the principal of the school is post level 4 and the deputy is post level three, HOD post level two the people start questioning who are you to tell us when you are post level so I think that’s unreasonable on my side to be post level one addressing issues with people on post level four”.* LSTs feel strongly that they do not have the authority to give instructions because of the post level they are occupying.

5.10.8 Integrated Quality Management System for Learning Support Teachers

When asked what their challenges were as LSTs, one of the issues that arose was the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) that is performance appraisals of them. According to the DoE (2003:18), there was to be an ongoing assessment of teachers’ needs through development appraisal, followed by structured programmes to meet their needs. The study revealed that the

Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) posed a challenge to the successful implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase. LSTs were unclear about who should evaluate them, and neither the principals nor the district personnel wanted to make their performance appraisals. In the South African context. The purpose of IQMS is to identify specific needs of educators, schools and district offices for support and development, and to promote accountability, provide support for continued growth, monitor an institution's overall effectiveness and evaluate educators' performance (DoE, 2003:1). There seems to be no one taking responsibility for evaluating the performance of the LSTs, and their key performance areas are not the same as those of teachers because they are not working at one school. Their roles are not the same as those of teachers. The following comments were made by the respondents:

D: *"The development appraisal is a problem, because school principals do not want to do it because they say we do not understand the way you work and the district say go to your principals to do IQMS".*

G: *"So you know, it's hurting, I don't need her in my school anymore and the IQMS thing, they can't do it, they tell you go to the district because you don't belong to me"*

The policy on IE is clear about where the specialist teachers belong, which according to the policy is the DBST, therefore their IQMS should be carried out by relevant personnel at district level.

5.10.9 Concluding remarks regarding management factors

The study found that some education officials were not conversant with the policy of Inclusive Education, which can pose a serious threat to the implementation of the policy as they are supposed to lead the way. One can argue that if the officials are unsure how to implement the policy they will find it difficult to support schools and teachers on IE. Intensive training of such officials needs to be considered, if the vision and the goals of IE are to be reached. Job dissatisfaction can impact on the effectiveness of what one is expected to do in terms of his or her roles. From

the data above it can be concluded that even though LSTs are experiencing challenges when they are supposed to be evaluated on their performance, they claim that no one is willing to evaluate them. That could have a negative impact to the implementation of IE, as they assume that no one is taking what they are doing in the schools seriously, therefore neither is the implementation important. This can be attributed to the inappropriate planning on the district's side, because if they prioritise the support of learners who experience barriers to learning as with all the other activities at the district, the implementation of IE will run smoothly. It is important for management to consider the issues mentioned above for the successful implementation of IE. This affirms Bronfenbrenner's theory that the various systems need to work together in order to form a complete whole.

5.11 RESOURCES

The third research question was "What strategies could be used to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase?"

5.11.1 Introduction

It is clear from the analysis of data that the LSTs suggested some strategies that would make the implementation of Inclusive Education a success. The DoE has plans and structures in place aimed at successful implementation however there are still some challenges in the Foundation Phase. When asked to mention any strategies that could help here, LSTs spoke of the need for adequate and appropriate resources, adequate human resources, material resources and appropriate infrastructure.

This affirms the literature in Chapter 2, in which Yorke (2008: 52) identified several problems and challenges in the exo-system, notably the education system, social development, health services, the media, parents' place of work, community organisation, and resources - either human or financial - that are not readily available and that may delay service delivery to the provinces.

LSTs suggested collaboration as another strategy to enhance the implementation of IE. Because no one can do it alone it should be a joint effort by everyone who has a stake in education and is concerned about the learners succeeding and reaching their potential. There is a need for teachers to establish partnerships with each other and parents, and for districts to collaborate with one another and with the schools and units within the districts. Districts and the head office need to communicate and have the same vision when it comes to IE. Collaboration as experienced by LSTs requires teamwork and multidisciplinary support, necessary with all the stakeholders.

Implementing Inclusive Education also requires adequate and appropriate resources, confirmed by the LSTs, all of whom reported having experienced difficulties with human, material or infrastructural resources. They strongly believed that it was not easy trying to implement a policy without adequate or appropriate resources.

5.11.2 Provision of adequate human resources

Meaningful learning is likely to happen if adequate human resources are available to enable the implementation of IE to be successful. LSTs expressed the provision of adequate human resources for supporting learners who experience barriers to learning as one strategy which would enhance the implementation of IE. As recorded in Chapter One, during the time of the study there were 216 LSTs in Gauteng Province, with 16 in the district in which it was conducted. Each LST had five to seven schools to support, and those have more than ten learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. All the LSTs felt that the ratio of the LSTs to schools should be revised to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education.

Respondent B said of human resources, *“That we can have more LSTs because the schools are many; if we can have all the therapists in the system, we have specialised teachers, yes and material resources”*. In addition, respondent D emphasised the need for therapists in the system: *“We can all have therapists in the system, we have specialised teachers”*. In support of the statements,

respondent G said: *“Well like whereby they said aah aah - inclusive education should have those resource person therapists of which we don’t have in our schools. We should have a school nurse in, only one local nurse from the local clinic, and who have to move around schools about forty-eight schools at a time, so there is never sufficient manpower with regard to that, and also the implementation part of it really, training for the teachers to implement it.”*

Sharing the sentiments, respondent A said: *“Good, again it would be maybe manpower. If they increase support educators in the district, so far we are only sixteen of us or ten and we are expected to support plus or minus a hundred and forty four schools, including high schools”.*

According to the WP6 there should be a provision of resources to ensure successful implementation. Resources are another challenge to the LSTs, as highlighted by LST A: *“Where they said inclusive education should have resources persons, like therapist of whom we do not have in our schools, we should have a school nurse, so there is never sufficient manpower”.* The LSTs felt frustrated when faced with urgent issues that needed to be referred to a professional, such as a speech therapist. Also, there was a shortage of therapists in the DoE, so learners with specific problems were not easily helped. Even if the learners were identified early they would take time or not receive assistance.

LSTs are committed and enthusiastic professionals who with adequate and appropriate human resources will ensure that most, if not all, learners who experience barriers to learning will be assisted.

5.11.3 Provision of adequate material resources

The value of having adequate and appropriate material resources to promote learning cannot be overestimated in the implementation of Inclusive Education, with LSTs requiring adequate and relevant materials to enable them effectively to fulfil their duties. However, LST C reported that: *“We do not have any resources, I use my own materials”.* LST A pointed out that: *“Resources like chairs and desks to sit on, you know the whole furniture, is also a challenge to these teachers even.*

if I am going to teach a child about a circle. I am expected that every child in my class have something a circle like but you won't find that". Provision of adequate materials can promote the successful implementation of IE. In addition, LSTs strongly believe that the provision of material resources such as stationery, relevant teaching and learning material, teaching aids and an office in which to work would enhance implementation.

5.11.4 Provision of appropriate infrastructure

Lack of, or inappropriate infrastructure becomes a barrier to learning and development when individual needs are not met in the classroom. LSTs felt that having appropriate infrastructure in schools would enhance the implementation of IE because then all learners, even those experiencing physical disabilities, would be accommodated. For example, learners who are experiencing physical disabilities and are confined to wheelchairs need access to the classrooms, as was pointed out by LST F: *If a child is disabled and he can't walk the school should be able to provide ramps and wheelchairs for the child".*

LST D concurred, stating that the infrastructural resources were not yet disability-friendly in most of the schools: *"There must be enough resources in the school so that they can be accommodative to those learners because some of them have disabilities, for instance those who are on wheelchairs you find that a school has double storey buildings, it becomes impossible for those learners to move around the school".* The physical environment is not yet accommodative for learners with barriers to learning in all schools in South Africa.

5.11.5 Concluding remarks regarding resources

Learning Support Teachers feel neglected because of the unavailability of many resources that could make the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase run smoothly. The research has also shown that resources remain a serious impediment to the implementation of policies. Therefore, if the DoE is serious about the effective implementation of IE they should make sure that the resources are available to those involved.

5.12 COLLABORATION

When asked which strategies could enhance the implementation of IE, the LSTs included collaboration, believing all the systems should work together, i.e., all the role players involved in education, such as teachers, districts, LSTs and the other departments. As indicated above, there is a need for teachers to establish partnerships and for parents and districts to collaborate.

5.12.1 Introduction

It is clear from the findings that schools, districts, NGOs and head office need to be in partnership in order to help the learners to succeed, because barriers to learning influence the whole education system and society in general.

This affirms Bronfenbrenner's theory, which demonstrates how a micro-system, for example the home, is interwoven with the meso-system, for example the school, as well as the wider society, in determining the level of comfort and contentment human beings experience as they go about their life courses (Haihambo 2010:65). According to WP6, existing resources in the community will help support learners and will be used to strengthen support at district level (DoE 2001a:18). Collaboration as experienced by LSTs can be defined as a necessity for teamwork, as can multidisciplinary support with all the stakeholders. Collaboration in this study will be discussed under the following categories.

5.12.2 A need to strengthen collaboration among role-players

Strengthening collaboration between the various districts could be as another strategy to enhance the implementation of IE. The LSTs mentioned that even though they belonged to one province they did not function in the same way with regards to the LSTs, as stated by respondent F: *"The other LSTs from other districts gets a mandate from the district, they are now in their organogram, and they are given money when they attend workshops"*. This creates tension because LSTs feel that they are treated unfairly in comparison to LSTs in the other districts. Respondent D expressed concern: *"As a province somewhere people are doing*

something different, so we do not work the same way as LSTs". Respondent C suggested that: *"We need a common way of assessing, common way of supporting learners and a common way of doing Individual Education Plan (IEP), common way of reporting"*. The inconsistency in functioning was further emphasised by respondent E: *"I have seen in other districts, LST are in the other district's organogram but here in our district we are not there, but we are invited to DBST meetings, there is no uniformity among the districts, the other district is doing this, the other one is doing that"*. This indicates that the districts are not working collaboratively or do not share information.

5.12.3 Strengthening collaboration among the units in the district

It was noted in Chapter Three that the DBST provides a coordinated professional support service to the schools. LSTs mentioned that collaboration between all the units in the district was necessary for the effective implementation of IE. If all the units at the district were working together, then LSTs would be successful in fulfilling their duties to help the learners succeed. Respondent C said that: *"We can strengthen each other give support so that we can be successful"*. Out of frustration, respondent A said: *"It's very frustrating, it's very frustrating really because you know like I said I would recommend that this child should be retained at least to develop this language and here comes the district official from the curriculum department saying the policy says the learner cannot be retained based on language, you know we are doing two different things and where is the teacher, the poor teacher?"* If units are not working collaboratively, tension exists between teachers and LSTs and districts, because teachers are not sure who to listen to when people are sending out different messages.

This was affirmed by respondent D: *"I have been there almost from January up to now but suddenly when a decision is taken I am no longer part of it and usually the decision taken by the district is not really accepted by the school, so there is this drift between us and the official most of the time because I have said this, the school said this, and the district said this, of which maybe our belonging as I said, White Paper said we should belong to the district, it can bring maybe some issues*

at all like this, who am I to take decisions?

The importance of strengthening collaboration was further emphasised by respondent B: *“There is this hierarchy thing in the district, I know, you know someone think that she is an official she won’t sit in this meeting with a LST so it was tough, whereby a meeting was called and we find all the LST being there and no one else, I don’t know.”* Respondent C said: *“There are many different kinds of units, I have seen there is no link there, ISS, inclusion and special schools, no linkage with other units and I think there must be some kind of communication since well as we are learning support or inclusive, we are busy dealing curriculum people issues. I think the curriculum people must be on board about what’s happening, if I say a teacher must modify the curriculum what is supposed to be done there? We need to work together, really, with these units assessment, inclusion you know yes.”*

The importance of collaboration between the units and an established protocol that reflects the hierarchy within the system cannot be neglected if the vision of Inclusive Education is to be realised. It is evident from these comments that LSTs need all the support available for them to implement IE successfully.

5.12.4 Strengthening interdepartmental collaboration

LSTs pointed out a need to strengthen collaboration with other departments such as Social services, Department of Health, and the Police, but during the time of this study it was not practically possible, and not happening as articulated in the policy. This delayed the implementation process as interdepartmental collaboration is sometimes not practically possible. Respondent E highlighted the importance of collaborating with other departments as one strategy which could enhance the implementation of IE: *“Since I need to collaborate with other stakeholders, I do not have a reliable social worker who attends to such cases, I do not have a child psychologist, I do not have a policeman, so for these cases that I cannot handle I should refer them to the professionals”*. This reflects the frustration and helplessness of the LST in fulfilling her work because it is not

always possible to get those services. For LST A it was also a challenge because it was not easy to get the services of all the other departments, and she suggested that they (LSTs) be trained in the skills that they do not have, so that they can intervene immediately without waiting for a specialist: *“Usually the school consult the district office and that’s where a directive will come and say ‘Maam can you please go to school and see what you can do’, and I think the other thing that we need is training in all spheres because we are expected to do so much like counselling of kids. We have done crash courses on counselling of which I am not happy about it whereby maybe you will find a child who wanted to commit suicide and you don’t even know how to tackle such issues, or a boy in Grade Twelve is very tall, you know he’s got issues, I feel and we lack those expertise as LST, so we need more training in those, counselling and also I am not happy about the kind of assessment that we are administering, we need some uniformity in the district or in the province if I may say it.”*

This became evident in the words of LST E, when she said: *“For example for a serious case like rape, they call us LSTs instead of referring that learner may be to social workers and to the police they say no come we are having a problem then you rush there”*. According to the LSTs it is not easy to access services of other professionals in other departments as they also have their job descriptions in their home departments.

Collaboration between departments is vital for the successful implementation of IE, and LSTs emphasised that there were some problems, such as learners who need medical care, abuse, violence and rape, which they were unable to solve themselves but which required someone with the relevant skills and competencies.

5.12.5 A need for collaboration with non-governmental organisations

The role that an NGO can play in the implementation of IE should not be underestimated. Many parents and caregivers attend churches, which can be a good platform for informing them about Inclusive Education, and in turn can make the implementation run smoothly. Respondent A asked: *“Why am I saying that? You know usually I will be invited to churches where they usually say: say something about education and they usually do this at the beginning of the year when everyone is happy with the new year and everything, and when I talk to the them about learning more especially learning disability you know, you see people are aware but they don’t know what is this, why am I supposed to do? You know there are so many questions that were never answered and when am talking about the church is the community at large the school community so it was never really, and then to the fact you know when we talk about disability more especially the learning disability part the school does identify a learner as having this learning disability and you know what the parents of those learners go to Home Affairs and apply for grant you know so because it is disability grant, they want to get money so it’s one of the things that say they don’t understand. They were never taught what this is all about so we need to go out to our community, to our churches wherever we are and talk about inclusion and in the school.”* According to respondent C: *“There is also ‘the Acres of Love’ [NGO] which feed these learners who are needy”.*

This shows the commitment of an NGO to making sure that learners who are not receiving any help from home are assisted. Talking about IE in churches will give the community a chance to learn about IE. Working together for the children’s benefit is the ultimate goal of IE.

The literature study in Chapter Two discussed the ecological model and its emphasis on the interrelatedness of all the parts within a whole; for example, a school has staff, learners, teachers, and HODs, serving as subsystems who are all working together towards one goal, that is the education of the learner. Therefore, LSTs are supposed to be in collaboration with the teachers in order to develop the children’s potential. Findings from the interviews also revealed the importance of

collaboration in enhancing the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase. It should be noted that there are many barriers to learning, inter alia, social and socio-economic, that the LSTs experience at schools. As such, the LSTs believe that not all the barriers to learning are, or can be, the responsibility of the LST alone. Therefore, collaboration among all stakeholders is necessary for the successful implementation of IE. Achieving stakeholder and LST collaboration is the responsibility of both groups.

5.12.6 A need to strengthen collaboration between the teachers and LSTs as the key role players

Learning Support Teachers strongly believe that teachers are the critical agents in the implementation of IE, therefore their involvement and commitment towards learners who experience barriers to learning will determine the success of IE. According to the policy on IE, teachers are supposed to identify learners who are experiencing learning barriers and intervene, but if teachers are unable to solve the learners' problems, provision is made for the teachers to consult the LST for further assistance, because he or she has the requisite skills and experience. The study has revealed that the LSTs intervene when they are requested to, but they are discouraged by teachers who are unwilling to implement what they suggest. Furthermore, it seems teachers are not prepared to cope with learners who are experiencing barriers to learning as many think that they belong to a special school

LSTs mentioned the importance of training for teachers if IE is to be successful. It is emphasised in the following words of LST B: "*We must workshop them to understand the WP6 because maybe they are doing it because they don't understand it and the teachers also they must be work-shopped*". Inclusive Education should not be treated as an add-on or 'piggybacking' on the curriculum, but as an important aspect of the curriculum. Teachers must realise that a learner needs to be taught holistically, that is all the aspects that can hamper success of educating the learner should be considered and dealt with. This was affirmed by LST C who said: "*Some principals are still difficult; they do not understand this*

inclusion thing". A learner who is hungry in class and has socio-economic barriers may not concentrate, and that will affect the results at the end of the year. LSTs are specialised teachers who support teachers and learners in schools; therefore the DoE and the districts should make sure that the LSTs are appropriately utilised and supported.

5.12.7 Concluding remarks regarding collaboration

From the discussion above one can conclude that for LSTs to implement IE they need the support from everyone able to give it, as they are not specialists in all the fields. They mentioned that there were some problems that they could not solve alone, and as such they require services of professionals. Therefore the collaboration of everyone on all the levels is highly important. This affirms Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory because the theory also explains the differences in the individual's knowledge, skills and abilities and the role of support system to guide and structure the individual. The overlapping micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems all contribute to form the whole that the individual will perceive as positive or negative (Haihambo 2010:65). Therefore, collaboration of the various systems is regarded as important for the implementation of IE.

5.13 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION OF THE DIAGRAM

The diagram illustrates the emerging themes from the study. The blue represents the Learning Support Teachers who are the main respondents in the study; green is for the principals; purple for the classroom teachers; and in the centre is the child, coloured red to represent the danger that the child could face if not one of the factors is considered. The child is affected by what is happening in all systems surrounding him or her. If the LSTs experience all the problems indicated in blue it means those problems will in turn affect the learner and also the implementation of Inclusive Education negatively. As such, the implementation of a policy of IE becomes problematic.

A summary of the findings on the experiences of a group Learning Support Teachers, principals and classroom teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education with reference to Gauteng is illustrated in Figure 5.1 (below):

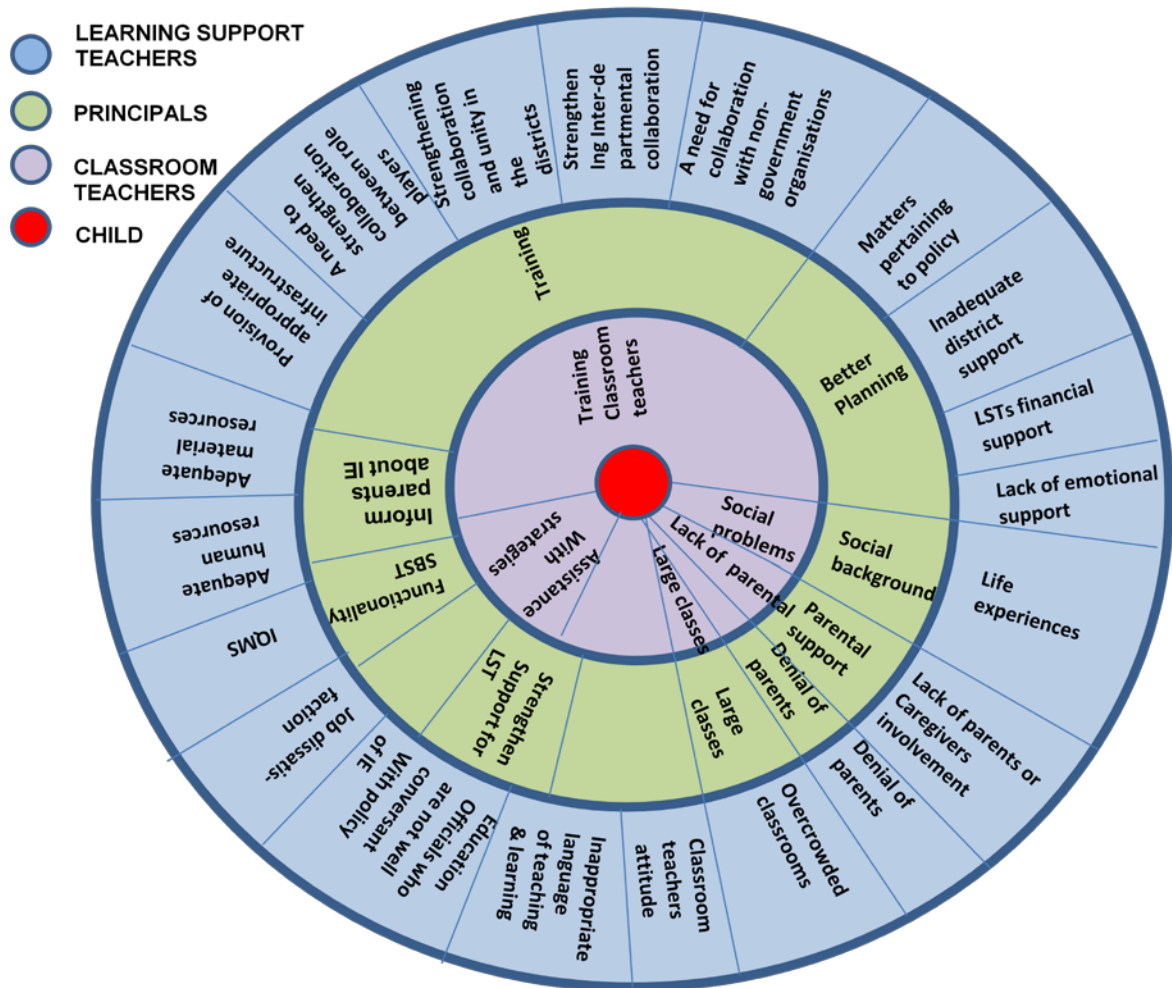


Figure 5.1: Summary of the findings: problems experienced by role players at school level in the implementation of IE.

This affirms Bronfenbrenner’s theory that human development occurs because of the interacting systems, resulting in change, growth and development, namely physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural. It is clear from the above diagram that the role players at the school level, such as LSTs, principals and classroom teachers, are unable to provide learners who experience learners to

barriers with support, because of the problem they are faced with in the implementation of Inclusive Education. For the findings in this study, the theory is particularly relevant for the micro-level, which is the school. The school is where the implementation should happen in practice, and LSTs, principals and classroom teachers are supposed to implement the policy at school level. However, the factors mentioned above indicate that there are certain ones which are affecting the implementation negatively.

5.14 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of the research was to explore the experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the Foundation Phase with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng. The data discussed in this chapter confirms that to implement Inclusive Education there needs to be careful planning, appropriate resources, support and collaboration between the role players. This could be stated based on the data obtained from the interviews with LSTs, principals and classroom teachers. It is significant that, for the purpose of this study, even though Inclusive Education is implemented at schools in Gauteng, with the assistance of LSTs, there are some factors which are slowing down the implementation. These factors then cause tension and frustration as LSTs are not as productive as they wished.

Learning Support Teachers as the main respondents in the study are seen as a valuable resource in the implementation of Inclusive Education as they are rotating in schools to support learners and teachers. They believed that they cannot do it alone and need all stakeholders to become involved, so that they can be effective in what they are doing. They further mentioned the importance of teachers realising that they can be barriers without realising it by their attitudes. Some of the LSTs' views were similar to those of the principals and classroom teachers, such as lack of parental support, overcrowding, socio-economic factors of the learners, language of teaching and learning, training, and denial of parents.

Principals as the head of the school have power and authority to influence the teachers at schools and as such LSTs rely on the support of the principal to influence the teachers to practice Inclusive Education. Principals and classroom teachers, as the receiver of support, also highlighted their viewpoints on the implementation of Inclusive Education by LSTs in Gauteng. They mentioned that they benefited from the support of LSTs and acknowledged that they needed to be trained in IE, so that when the LSTs are not readily available they can also assist the learners in need. They indicated that parents and caregivers who are not supporting children can be a barrier.

The experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase with reference to Gauteng were discussed in detail in this chapter. The findings were consistent across the sets of data collected. The findings revealed that Learning Support Teachers experience both challenges and successes in the implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng and certain difficulties need to be attended to. The final chapter draws a conclusion to the research and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

An inclusion policy lays the foundation for all classrooms to become inclusive areas of learning and teaching. Furthermore the inclusive learning environments demonstrate a value system by which all learners feel a sense of belonging and are accepted regardless of their different needs. Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) in Gauteng are assisting schools in the implementation of Inclusive Education, as they address the social, physical, emotional and educational needs of learners. However, the implementation seems to be a challenge when they try to provide educational programmes for all learners. The LSTs should be appropriately utilised to fulfill their purpose if the vision of Inclusive Education is to be realised.

In this study a qualitative approach was used in order to find out the experiences of LSTs in the Foundation Phase, with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng. In answering the research question, interviews, document analysis and observations were used as methods of data collection.

The following were the objectives of the research:

- To find out the experiences of LSTs in Gauteng with reference to implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase.
- To find out factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng.
- To explore the strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education by the LSTs in the Foundation Phase

The findings were consistent across all sets of data collected. Principals and classroom teachers were also interviewed as the recipients of the support

rendered by the LSTs to support the findings. The research enabled the LSTs to relate their experiences regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase in Gauteng.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

When reflecting on the findings of the study, it was noted that although LSTs are implementing Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase, there are other factors that make the implementation less successful than wished for. The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences of LSTs in the implementation of Inclusive Education with reference to Gauteng. The relevant literature was reviewed in Chapters Two and Three, whilst in Chapter Four the methodology was discussed and in Chapter Five the data was analysed. The findings from the literature review, documents, observation and interviews are addressed according to themes identified from the analysis. As indicated in Chapter 1.1, in order to be employed as an LST, one should be a qualified teacher with relevant experience and expertise in the field of special needs, remedial education, learning support or Inclusive Education.

When analyzing the profiles, most of the LSTs had experience of teaching mainstream learners for five to 15 years and had worked in the areas of learning support for one to four years (see Table 5.1). They had diplomas in teaching and a certificate in either learning support or special needs, which indicate that they were suitably qualified to hold those positions. Furthermore, they had been in the education system for a long time before the introduction of Inclusive Education but had upgraded their qualifications. So it was evident that they were qualified to teach learners experiencing barriers to learning.

To ensure that Inclusive Education is implemented effectively, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) was proactive in employing the LSTs to assist in that regard, because teacher training programmes had not prepared the mainstream teachers with the skills to teach learners with barriers to learning. To

make up for this deficit, in-service training has been used as one method to enhance the skills of teachers.

LSTs were asked about their experiences with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education and what meaning those experiences had for them. They mentioned both successes and challenges, and all agreed that Inclusive Education as an educational strategy could contribute to a democratic society because it embraces the democratic values of equality, human rights and recognition of diversity. Engelbrecht (2006:256) asserts that Inclusive Education within the South African context follows a human rights approach, transforming the human values of integration into the immediate rights of excluded learners. It is therefore based on the ideal of freedom and equality as described by the Constitution, and is seen as a single system of education dedicated to ensuring that all individuals are able to become competent citizens in a changing and diverse society. However, the LSTs who formed part of this research had their reservations regarding Inclusive Education, believing it to be good on paper but difficult to implement without adequate support.

The next section provides a brief summary of the research questions investigated and makes recommendations. It is important to note that the themes and sub-themes are highly interrelated and that a comment from LSTs, classroom teachers or principals could be related to more than one theme. The next section provides a brief summary of the answers to the research questions.

6.3 EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The LSTs related a number of opinions on implementing Inclusive Education in schools, in particular indicating more support to the teachers so that they can help learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development.

6.3.1 Implementation of Inclusive Education

With the appropriate support, LSTs would be able to support learners who experience barriers to learning and development. Conversely, as the researcher argues, it is not beneficial to be educated in a mainstream school in which there is little or no support. The literature study in Chapter Three emphasised the importance of support in the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase, and findings from the interviews confirmed that lack of support has a huge impact. IE requires schools to respond to the diversity of their learners and to provide equal opportunities for all learners to receive high quality education. The South African Schools Act (DoE 2006a), section 3 (4) (i) on the age requirements for the admission of learners to an ordinary public school or different grades at school states that: “a learner may be admitted to Grade one if he or she turns seven in the course of that calendar year. A learner who is younger than this age may not be admitted to Grade one”. However, this appears not to be happening in practice in schools as schools still accept learners who are underage, thus affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education as learners are not yet well developed and so continue to experience learning barriers.

Findings in this study confirm a lack of commitment to put policies into practice, and it was further apparent that there were learners of five years in age being admitted to Grade one, thus creating problems for teachers as learners cannot cope with the amount of work or the activities expected of Grade one learners. As such, learners are identified as having barriers to learning, whereas the root cause of the problem is that because they were admitted early they had not yet developed appropriately. LSTs highlighted a need to revisit the admission policy so as to be able to implement Inclusive Education policy successfully. The view of the researcher is that school readiness programmes can be designed to check the developmental level and determine if the learners are prepared for Grade one. However, careful consideration should be given that learners are not excluded from the system altogether because of those programmes.

Many schools in South Africa are affected by overcrowding, and findings from this study revealed many still had 50 to 60 learners in one classroom, rendering

effective learning and teaching difficult, and implementation of a new policy such as Inclusive Education policy highly impractical.

In South Africa, learners write for Annual National Assessments (ANA), which are tests that evaluate their competency in literacy and mathematics for the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3), and language and mathematics in the intermediate phase (Grades 4-6). The setting of the question papers and marking is administered by the Department of Basic Education. LSTs find the process of setting common papers problematic as the needs of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning are not considered or catered for when setting those tests, and all learners in that particular grade answer the same question paper. That in itself defeats the principle of Inclusive Education that a learner's pace should be considered so that he or she succeeds in education.

According to the DoE (2001a:19), good teaching strategies will be developed to benefit all learners. This study identified gaps which interfere with the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase as those strategies mentioned are not used when designed. LSTs design programmes for learners identified as having barriers to learning and development to assist the learners, but the teachers do not often use them so that those learners can be assisted. Learners who experience barriers to learning and development are not included in teaching and learning because some of the teachers are not using those programmes to help those learners. This means that even if teachers were initially trained in Inclusive Education, the training is questionable and they still cannot accommodate learners with barriers.

Findings from the interviews also reveal the importance of support in the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase. All LSTs expressed frustration and helplessness in various issues concerning the implementation. Principals strongly indicated that without support the vision of Inclusive Education would not be realised. Learner Support Teachers are indeed giving support to the learner and teachers in schools, as was confirmed by the principals during the interviews, but the support of LSTs is still problematic, hence they are still struggling to implement Inclusive Education as it was intended.

The comments above reinforce Bronfenbrenner's theory that underpins the study, and the DoE is at the macro-level for the purpose of this study. The policy is formulated at the highest level of education (DoE), but if careful consideration is not given during the formulation of the policy at the macro-level it will affect all the levels. Therefore, the implementation of this policy (IE) will be affected. Considering all the statements above, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendations:

- It is therefore recommended that to reduce the number of underage learners in the classrooms, the policy on admission should be reviewed. It is suggested that school readiness programmes be developed creatively, not to discriminate or exclude learners but to assess the learners' level of development before admitting them to Grade one. If a learner performs badly he or she could be given a bridging programme so as to be on par with peers.
- To minimise overcrowding in the classroom, the researcher recommends that most of the activities take place outside the classroom, because the learners in the Foundation Phase learn by playing. A needs analysis could be conducted for buildings in schools that have more learners.
- It is recommended that teacher assistants be employed to give extended classroom support, especially to learners experiencing barriers to learning. More LSTs should be employed with elevated post level, so as to make the profession attractive and encourage more teachers to register and be qualified in learning support, thus helping address the issue of shortage of human resources.
- To accommodate learners with barriers to learning in the common paper tests, it is recommended that a representative at the top level, to represent the voices of learners with barriers, should be part of the team that sets question paper for common tests examination. In this way learners who experience barriers to learning and development can be accommodated.

6.3.2 Inadequate District Support

This study found that LSTs are experiencing frustration and helplessness as district officials do not monitor or evaluate to check if they are doing what they are supposed to do. However, the DBST, as emphasised by the policy on Inclusive Education, is not yet functional in the way it was set out, therefore LSTs are not receiving adequate support from the district.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that monitoring and evaluation be strengthened at the district level.

6.3.3 Learning Support Teachers Financial Support

Findings from the study reveal that LSTs are not provided with adequate financial support and as such they are unable to visit many schools as they have no means of transport.

Recommendation:

- Based on the fact that LSTs are district posts, and play a crucial role in the implementation of IE, it is recommended that they also be included in their district budget. This would reduce the issues of not having money for transport, the use of mobile telephones and inadequate stationery.

6.3.4 Lack of Emotional Support

The study found that LSTs are not provided with any emotional support, even though they come across different kinds of problems as they support learners and teachers.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that LSTs be provided with relevant and appropriate emotional support, such as debriefing. This can be done in the form of debriefing sessions where all the LSTs meet and talk about their experiences during the week. This can be facilitated by a psychologist who will be able to carry out the debriefing.

6.4 FINDINGS ON THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

This study found that there are several factors contributing to the implementation of Inclusive Education, each of which has been described and defined in Chapter Five. The factors that influence the implementation of Inclusive Education as identified in this study are addressed under the following headings.

6.4.1 Domestic Factors of Learners

A number of factors relating to the learner's home environment are relevant.

6.4.1.1 *Life experiences*

The research findings indicate that one of the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education is the life experiences of the learners, such as abuse, rape, HIV/AIDS, poverty and violence.

Recommendations:

- Encourage the practice and use of available structures in the community, such as home based organisations which provide services to vulnerable children in terms of guidance, as well as help with schoolwork and general health.

- It is therefore recommended that teachers who are teaching Life Skills should emphasise the importance of teaching learners about assertiveness during their early years, when they know their rights and responsibilities they can protect themselves from issues mentioned above.

6.4.1.2 Lack of parental or caregivers involvement

The literature in Chapter Three recommends that parents recognise that they play an important role in the education of learners. In South Africa the majority of parents are deceased, leaving the grandmothers to care for the children. With child-headed households and parents or caregivers who are illiterate and unemployed, or working long hours, there is poverty at home. All the factors mentioned above prevent parental participation in the learning process (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin 2006:127). In this study, lack of participation by parents and caregivers is delaying the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng.

It is important to note that findings from the interviews with LSTs, principals and teachers from the schools confirm that parents and caregivers could play an important role in ensuring that they support the Inclusive Education policy so that learners who are experiencing barriers to learning are accommodated and supported.

Recommendation:

- It is therefore recommended that integrating school activities with community activities in the implementation of Inclusive Education is of the utmost importance, more so when one considers the findings in the study. Traditionally, leaders in the community are respected, and whatever they say is listened to, irrespective of whether they are educated or not. Learning Support Teachers can form partnerships with the community leaders, such as ward councillors who always have an education desk to deal with problems, and who usually call political meetings. There are also ministers or priests in churches, and burial society chairpersons to allocate

them a slot in whatever gathering they have with the community, and so talk about Inclusive Education. With these initiatives, parents would realise the importance of Inclusive Education.

6.4.1.3 Denial of parents

In the South African Schools Act (DoE 2006b) it is stated clearly that the rights and wishes of parents must overrule the admission policy of any governing body of a school, thus giving the parents a choice in the placement of their learners. However, in this study most parents were using this clause to deny learners the opportunity to be educated at the appropriate and relevant schools. The findings are that there is denial amongst parents regarding learners who are identified as having barriers to learning, and as such the implementation of IE is being delayed.

When analysing the findings from the interviews, LSTs and principals agree that denial by parents affects the implementation of IE negatively. When learners are identified by the schools and the LSTs as having learning barriers that cannot be addressed at the mainstream schools that they attend, some parents have a tendency of saying their children are not 'mentally disturbed' so they will not allow them to attend a recommended school where they would get appropriate support. The problem is compounded when a parent suspects that the child has been 'bewitched,' and such learners are taken to the traditional healers who will then tell the parents that the child has been bewitched by a particular person. That in itself delays the implementation of Inclusive Education, as the LST and the school have to wait with their intervention strategies for those of the traditional healer.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that parents be taken through the process of screening of learners. Participation of parents in the screening, identification, assessment, support (SIAS), will help them understand the reasons for saying their child has a barrier and that barrier affects his or her learning and therefore needs help.

- An advocacy campaign on awareness of learning barriers is recommended in this situation because if parents know that the problem could affect the learner in future they will respond appropriately.

6.4.2 Classroom Factors

A number of classroom factors impact on the implementation of Inclusive Education in schools.

6.4.2.1 Overcrowded classrooms

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two highlighted that overcrowding in South African classrooms was rife, with in some classes 50 to 60 learners in one classroom. Teachers were therefore unable to identify most learners who experience barriers to learning

The finding from the study confirms that classroom teachers are finding it difficult to cope with the situation in the classes; as such they develop negative attitudes to learners experiencing barriers to learners. The problem is compounded when the LSTs go to the school to help learners with barriers, as classroom teachers will say that they do not have any such learners.

Recommendation:

- Teacher assistants could be hired to help classroom teachers with learners experiencing barriers to learning and development by giving them individual attention. They could group learners for activities and if possible take some of the activities outside.

6.4.2.2 Classroom teacher's attitude

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two confirmed that one of the most difficult challenges in preparing teachers to work in diverse classrooms is ensuring that

they have a positive attitude towards learners with different backgrounds and special educational needs and that they are willing participants in the inclusion movement (Forlin 2010:165). The hectic schedule of classroom teachers, in which there is a new policy to implement, may lead to the teachers having a negative attitude.

Attitudes and beliefs of classroom teachers are important regarding inclusive educational practices because they are considered as the most influential aspects in determining the success of inclusion. Classroom teachers' attitudes were found to be having a great impact because teachers can themselves be barriers to learning and development without realising it. The beliefs that they are having towards learners experiencing barriers to learning and development play a very important role in the way they handle those particular learners. LSTs said that they experienced reluctance on the part of the teachers when dealing with learners who are experiencing barriers.

During the interviews with LSTs it was confirmed that the classroom teachers' attitudes had a powerful impact on teaching and learning, therefore their attitudes played a very important role in the successful implementation of Inclusive Education. According to the LSTs, teachers' negative attitudes can be ascribed to not knowing how to provide help, or to a lack of knowledge. The majority strongly believed that most classroom teachers did not believe they had the ability, skill or knowledge to teach learners with diverse needs in their classes, and they believed that learners experiencing barriers were supposed to be taught by a person with specialised training. This way of thinking becomes a barrier to the implementation of Inclusive Education as those learners are not identified early or provided with appropriate support.

Recommendation:

- Most of the classroom teachers are overwhelmed by continuous changes in the education system, as well as overcrowding in the classrooms, heavy workload, poor work situation and finances. They have their own personal problems and need to deal with their own wellbeing before they can take on

extra responsibilities. Anything that is new makes them uncomfortable. Training should be given to teachers firstly to deal with their own interpersonal relations and wellbeing, followed by training in the implementation of IE.

6.4.2.3 *Inappropriate language of learning and teaching*

Although findings indicate that the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) poses a challenge to most schools, the issue of having 11 official languages in South Africa adds to this. The LOLT can be a barrier when a teacher is unable to communicate with the learners in the language they understand.

Recommendations:

- Because of the diversity of languages it is difficult for a teacher to know all of them, so schools should strongly emphasise their language policy to the parents when they register learners.
- Learners can easily understand the language they use to communicate at home; it is therefore recommended that teachers acknowledge each learner's mother tongue when teaching concepts in the Foundation Phase.

6.4.3 Management Factors

Findings revealed a number of factors relating to management, which impact on the implementation of Inclusive Education in schools.

6.4.3.1 *Education officials and teachers who are not conversant with policy*

It is highlighted in Chapter One that a District Based Support Team (DBST) is the core provider of such support at district level. Members are personnel currently employed at a district, regional or provincial level, and could include psychologists, therapists, remedial and learning support teachers, special needs specialists and

other health and welfare professionals (DoE, 2005b:16).

The analysis of the interviews revealed that some Education officials are not conversant with IE. LSTs emphasised that in most provinces Inclusive Education is still headed by psychologists, yet most are not trained in IE. These delay the implementation of IE projected by the plan of the DoE, as outlined in the document Strategic Plan for 2007-2011 (p.40). During their workshops with LSTs they recommend assessment tools that should be used by them. However, most of those tools are relevant to psychologists and not the teachers assessing learners and placing them in special schools. The issue of support is thus neglected.

Some principals also indicated that they need to have knowledge about IE. It can be speculated that education managers and teachers are not conversant with the policy of Inclusive Education, and this lack of intensive training leads to a misconception about IE that can delay its implementation.

Recommendations:

- A person at a higher level who has a qualification in learning support should be employed in all the districts to advocate Inclusive Education.
- Intensive training on Inclusive Education for the managers, principals and teachers is required, designed to meet their needs.

6.4.3.2 Job dissatisfaction

In this study it was found that LSTs are dissatisfied with the level of the post they are in, namely post level one. This frustrates them because it means their experience and skills go unrecognised, as post level one is for the newly qualified teachers.

Recommendations:

- LSTs should initiate the guidelines on LSTs in Gauteng and compile a plan of action, because they are the ones who experience the implementation and know what will work and what will not.
- It is advisable to revisit the post level, upgrade the LSTs' rank, and develop guidelines on duties of the LST that will include performance appraisal.

6.4.3.3 Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) for LSTs

This study found that there is no monitoring or evaluation for the LSTs, which creates a problem for them as they are not sure whether they are doing the right thing or not. Since the post is newly established in education, LSTs need guidance and support in their daily practices. Their work needs to be evaluated as what they are doing is different from what the classroom teachers do on a daily basis, that is teach, whereas LSTs rotate amongst the schools.

Recommendations:

- On the issue of IQMS it is recommended that since the classroom teachers do not have the same job description, classroom teachers are based in the classroom and mainly teach. LSTs' key performance areas are not the same as those for teachers, and their job description is not to teach but to support teachers and learners, and network with other role players who are contributing towards the education of learners. Key performance areas for LSTs need to be developed, considering their job description and what they are actually involved in.
- A new template designed specifically to suit the LSTs with their duties clearly stated IQMS should be drawn up by the district official responsible for the Learning Support Teachers, because he or she understands their job description.
- All district officials should be trained in Inclusive Education so that quality of monitoring support and evaluation of LSTs can be carried out thoroughly.

6.4.3.4 Functionality of School Based Support Team (SBST)

From interviews with the principals of the schools there arose a number of significant findings, dealt with in this section. In schools in South Africa, education support teams have to be established as part of support networks for both teachers and learners (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin 2006:127). In Chapter Three it was indicated that the SBST or ILST is a quick, systematic and effective way in which teachers help to identify issues in education that need to be addressed as they emerge. The SBST develops an action plan to address these issues by implementing concrete steps. It is clear from the findings that the SBST in most of the schools is not functional.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that members of the SBST be trained on their roles and responsibilities. The DBST should monitor, support and evaluate the SBST continuously, to ensure they are functioning as required.

6.5 FINDINGS ON THE STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A number of strategies that can be used arose from the research. These are dealt with in turn in this section.

6.5.1 Resources

This study uncovered a lack of resources for LSTs wishing to implement Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng. Their frustrations and helplessness, with a lack of human and material resources, causes them to be concerned that they do not have enough manpower to service all the schools.

6.5.1.1 Inadequate human resources

Inclusive Education will be successful if existing resources such as LSTs are utilised effectively, but it will be even more significant to gauge the impact of additional resources, such as employing more LSTs, on the implementation of Inclusive Education.

Findings in this study reveal a shortage of resources, both human and material, and this negatively impacts on the implementation of Inclusive Education. Most LSTs mentioned that there were not enough of them to assist all the schools in the implementation of Inclusive Education.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that newly qualified teachers who have had training in Inclusive Education be recruited on an elevated status, so that more teachers will be attracted to the posts.

6.5.1.2 Adequate material resources

This study found that lack of adequate material resources hinders the implementation of IE. There is a lack of certain facilities at the schools and that affects the learners, and without those resources LSTs are finding it difficult to implement Inclusive Education. They pointed out especially the use of assessment tools to determine the level of functioning of learners who are having barriers to learning. The findings from the documents and the interviews reveal that they are using different assessment tools, and that creates a problem.

Learning Support Teachers are uncertain as to which assessment tools to use, and maintain that most Deputy Chief Education Specialists (DCES), who are in most instances psychologists, have the authority, power and influence to select which assessment tools can be used in schools. Therefore, they recommend assessment tools that suit them and work for them. This type of claim does not imply that psychologists do not have a role to play in inclusive education, and their

importance will be seen where there are learners who have been helped by the SBST and the LSTs but do not show any improvement, because they are highly qualified to do more intense work. LSTs maintain that they are not even qualified to interpret those tests and yet they are required to use them, which runs counter to the good intentions of inclusion, namely to support learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, because learners are then assessed and referred to special schools.

Recommendations:

- Develop a common assessment tool that can be used by Learning Support Teachers when they assess the level of functioning of the learners.
- Employ an official as (Deputy Chief Education Specialist) DCES who has a qualification in inclusion or learning support and will therefore be able to advocate inclusion.

6.5.1.3 Provision of adequate infrastructure

Appropriate resources are necessary for the implementation of the Inclusive Education policy. This study found that there are still some schools which are not wheelchair friendly and therefore not fully in a position to practice Inclusive Education.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the schools accommodate for learners in wheelchairs through community support. In the communities are people with appropriate skills, such as bricklayers, who can volunteer to build a ramp without charge, if asked to. Schools need to find creative ways to involve skilled people in the community.

6.5.2. Collaboration

For inclusion to succeed, the establishment of an inclusive school climate and culture, and the collaboration of all role players within the school community are important (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin 2006:122). From the literature in Chapter Three, inclusion is not an individual enterprise but a team effort, but there is no evidence of collaboration between teachers, LSTs or other role players in the education of learners. The benefits of collaboration include higher grades, positive attitudes and improved behaviour, more successful programmes and successful schools. The findings in this study are that collaboration is not happening as prescribed in EWP6, where it is established that stakeholders need to collaborate.

Recommendation:

- It has been recommended that the DBSTs should be strengthened; having similar professional status to nurses, speech therapists, and psychologists. However, this does not happen in practice, only on paper. The professionals are offered better salary packages than the private sector so they are not willing to settle for those that the DoE is offering them. If the DoE needs to retain such people they will have to revisit the packages so as to attract the professionals from the private sector or other departments outside education. The researcher argues that LSTs are the most appropriate human resource in this field because they are teachers who are skilled.

6.6. FUNCTIONALITY OF SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM

In schools in South Africa education support teams have to be established as part of support networks for both teachers and learners in schools (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin 2006:127). In Chapter Three it was indicated that the SBST or ILST is a quick, systematic and effective way in which teachers help to identify issues in education that need to be addressed as they emerge. The SBST develops an action plan to address these issues by implementing concrete steps.

It is clear from the findings that the SBST in most of the schools is not functional.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that members of the SBST be trained on their roles and responsibilities. The DBST should monitor, support and evaluate the SBST continuously, to ensure they are functioning as required.

6.7 GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION BY LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

The guidelines were based on the themes emerging from the study discussed in Chapter Five. The implementation of Inclusive Education in South Africa is still in its early stages, as provinces are trying methods that they think would work best for the learners and teachers to build an inclusive and training system. Noting that the provinces have a responsibility to develop their own provincial policy on Inclusive Education, according to their provincial needs, most are implementing IE on a trial-and-error basis. This study suggests the following guidelines about how LSTs could implement Inclusive Education in Gauteng, therefore improving their working conditions:

- Adequate monitoring and evaluation of LSTs by district officials should be strengthened as this would encourage them to be more productive. This can be achieved by monitoring how many learners were seen by the LST per week, and the cases that are closed will indicate the effectiveness of their visits to schools.
- Recruit a cohort of newly qualified teachers who are trained in practicing Inclusive Education as LSTs with elevated pay, so that they can influence the teachers who are already in service to practice Inclusive Education and change their attitudes towards learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- Qualifications of LSTs and their experience should be acknowledged by

elevating their status so that they are not tempted to leave the system to take up more favourable positions.

- There is a need to revisit the model of LSTs currently adopted. It would be easier if LSTs were servicing a cluster of schools in the vicinity, so that they do not experience transport problems.
- The implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase should be coupled with provision of sufficient support in terms of financial, emotional and matters pertaining to the implementation of policy.
- The implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase should be infused in the curriculum in all subjects, especially Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills, so that learners experiencing barriers in those particular subjects are accommodated.
- Training classroom teachers on adaptation of the curriculum can be achieved by adapting teaching and learning activities and lowering the expectations towards the learners who are experiencing barriers to learning.
- Resources are essential for the implementation of policies, Inclusive Education not excluded.
- Establish strong partnerships or collaborations with all stakeholders.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is evident that Learning Support Teachers experienced problems with the implementation of Inclusive Education and this had a detrimental effect. Inclusive Education policy is a good policy which aims to promote equal educational opportunities and success for all learners in South Africa. Since the implementation of Inclusive Education by LSTs in South Africa is new to the schools, the researcher found that there is little literature published on the topic. This necessitates further research on the implementation of Inclusive Education by Learning Support Teachers. This study found that there is a gap between the actual, practical implementation of the policy and what is written in the policy itself. Further research may be conducted on:

- A comparative study with Gauteng and other provinces about how they implement Inclusive Education.
- The role of the District Based Support Teams in the implementation of Inclusive Education.
- The involvement of male Learning Support Teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education. It was interesting to note that there was no male Learning Support Teacher.
- The role of classroom teachers' attitudes towards learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- The experiences of Inclusive Education specialists at district level on supporting schools on the implementation of Inclusive Education.
- Possible collaboration between stakeholders to establish the best way to implement Inclusive Education.
- Benefits of implementing Inclusive education effectively.

6.9 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations and delimitations were anticipated and considered in the study:

- There are nine provinces in South Africa; the other LSTs in another province may have different opinions and experiences regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase.
- Gauteng is divided into 15 districts but the study was only conducted in one district in Gauteng. This created borders as it did not allow the researcher to generalise about the experiences of existing LSTs in other districts.
- The study concentrated on the implementation of Inclusive Education by LSTs in the Foundation Phase only in township schools, which might create tensions as the voices of LSTs in the ex-model C, independent schools were not heard.
- The researcher was once an Inclusive Education Specialist in the district that the research was conducted; if a neutral person conducted the research in the same district the results may have been different.
- Interviews, observations and document analysis were used as a method of data collection, with a potential for limiting the study, because the researcher depended on what the respondents told her. Although the participants gave their consent it was not possible to know if they were giving their honest opinions.
- Anticipated limited literature about LSTs implementing inclusive education is likely to deprive readers in the current study of the knowledge that would have provided more views of South Africans on the topic.

6.10. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, the objectives of the study were met and all research questions answered; the respondents gave feedback on what they thought happened in the implementation of Inclusive Education. Implementation of Inclusive Education by

Learning Support Teachers is still in its early stages so provinces are still trying to find out what will work and what will not work. The study indicates that although the Gauteng Department of Education has a structured plan in place for the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase, greater care should be taken in assuring that the needs of the Learning Support Teachers are catered for.

There are still some factors which affect the implementation of Inclusive Education, such as policy issues on the macro-level. Provincial departments have a responsibility to develop provincial policies on Inclusive Education, such as employing LSTs to assist in its implementation. They also provide districts with guidance about how to proceed with implementation, but at the school level there could be a number of policies related to requirements of the South African Schools Act that may not carry inclusive practices and values, such as admission policy and language policy. These policies at school level might hamper the implementation of a well documented policy, such as White Paper No 6, on Inclusive Education.

This study found that, if provided with necessary resources, Learning Support Teachers could be a valuable resource in the implementation of Inclusive Education as they are able to reach where the Inclusive Specialist cannot, therefore consideration of their needs are important for the successful implementation of IE.

Lastly, it is also evident that Inclusive Education is not getting the necessary attention, but rather is regarded as an add-on to the curriculum. As such it may be difficult to achieve its purpose. Classroom teachers and principals in this study still regard it as less important than the other subjects, therefore impacting negatively on the implementation. However, if it were to be implemented effectively the benefits will be great, especially for learners experiencing barriers to learning.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

P.O. Box 22212
Crystal Park
1515

26 January 2008

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DIRECTOR
INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PERMISSION FOR RESEACH STUDY AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Dear Sir/Madam

I hereby request permission to conduct research at primary schools in Gauteng. I am presently registered for a PhD (Inclusive Education) with the University of South Africa (UNISA) under the supervision of Prof A.J. Hugo, tel no 012 429 4002/ 0827385299. The research is about "Experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education with reference to Gauteng". The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the experiences of Learning Support Educators in supporting Inclusive Education in Gauteng.
2. To find out the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase.
3. To explore the strategies to be used to enhance the implementation of IE by the LSTs in the Foundation phase.

A qualitative design will be used in conducting the research and the methods for data collection will be in the form of interviews, observation, and documents pertaining to the support rendered will be collected and analysed.

Participants in the study will be Learning Support Teachers who are currently supporting schools in Inclusive Education. Learning Support Teachers, principals and classroom teachers will be interviewed by the researcher in English and this will take not more than one hour after normal teaching time. Interviews will be audio taped with the consent of the participants. Interviews will be transcribed after which the tapes will be destroyed. A copy of the transcription will be returned to the participants to ensure that no misunderstandings occurred. Be assured that the principles of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy will be adhered to.

Thanking you in advance.
Yours truly

F.D. Mahlo (Mrs)
[Tel:012 429 4758](tel:0124294758)/ 082 431 3302

APPENDIX B



UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Enquiries: Nomvula Ubisi (011)3550488

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Date: | 18 April 2008 |
| Name of Researcher: | Mahlo Francina Dikeledi |
| Address of Researcher: | P.O. Box 22212 |
| | Crystal Park |
| | 1515 |
| Telephone Number: | 0119694496/0824313302 |
| Fax Number: | 0119694496 |
| Research Topic: | Experiences of learner-support educators in supporting teachers in the implementation of inclusive education model in Gauteng District |
| Number and type of schools: | 10 Primary Schools |
| District/s/HO | |

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Chief Director: Information and Knowledge Management
Room 501, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2000 P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000
Tel: (011) 355-0809 Fax: (011) 355-0734

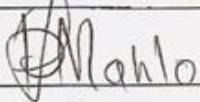
4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



CHIEF DIRECTOR: INFORMATION & KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

| | |
|--|--|
| The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher. | |
| Signature of Researcher: |  |
| Date: | 13/5/2008 |

APPENDIX C

P.O. Box 22212
Crystal Park
1515

26 January 2008

ATT: THE DIRECTOR
GAUTENG

PERMISSION FOR RESEACH STUDY AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Dear Sir/Madam

I hereby request permission to conduct research at primary schools in your District. I am registered for a PhD (Inclusive Education) with the University of South Africa (UNISA) under the supervision of Prof A.J. Hugo, tel no 012 429 4002/ 0827385299. The research is about "Experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education with reference to Gauteng". The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the experiences of Learning Support Educators in supporting Inclusive Education in Gauteng.
2. To find out the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase.
3. To explore the strategies to be used to enhance the implementation of IE by the LSTs in the Foundation phase.

A qualitative design will be used in conducting the research and the methods for data collection will be in the form of interviews, observation, and documents pertaining to the support rendered will be collected and analysed.

Participants in the study will be Learning Support Teachers who are currently supporting schools in Inclusive Education. Learning Support Teachers, principals and classroom teachers will be interviewed by the researcher in English and this will take not more than one hour after normal teaching time. Interviews will be audio taped with the consent of the participants. Interviews will be transcribed after which the tapes will be destroyed. A copy of the transcription will be returned to the participants to ensure that no misunderstandings occurred.

Be assured that the principles of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy will be adhered to. I have already requested permission from the Provincial Department of Education (GDE), been granted permission thereof. (See attached permission)

Thanking you in advance.
Yours truly

F.D. Mahlo (Mrs)
Tel: 012 429 4758/082 431 3302
mahlofd@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX D

P.O. Box 22212
Crystal Park
1515

26 January 2008

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT..... Primary School

I hereby request permission to conduct research at your school. I am registered for a PhD (Inclusive Education) with the University of South Africa (UNISA) under the supervision of Prof A.J. Hugo, tel no 012 429 4002/ 0827385299. The research is about "Experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education with reference to Gauteng". The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the experiences of Learning Support Educators in supporting Inclusive Education in Gauteng.
2. To find out the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase.
3. To explore the strategies to be used to enhance the implementation of IE by the LSTs in the Foundation phase.

A qualitative design will be used in conducting the research and the methods for data collection will be in the form of interviews, observation, and documents pertaining to the support rendered will be collected and analysed.

Participants in the study will be Learning Support Teachers who are currently supporting schools in Inclusive Education. Learning Support Teachers, principals and classroom teachers will be interviewed by the researcher in English and this will take not more than one hour after normal teaching time. Interviews will be audio taped with the consent of the participants. Interviews will be transcribed after which the tapes will be destroyed. A copy of the transcription will be returned to the participants to ensure that no misunderstandings occurred.

Be assured that the principles of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy will be adhered to. I have already requested permission from the Provincial Department of Education (GDE) and the District, been granted permission thereof. (See attached permission)

Thanking you in advance.

Yours truly

F.D. Mahlo (Mrs)
Tel: 082 431 3302

APPENDIX E

Dear Participant

Consent to participate in research

This is to request your participation in a research study. The researcher is a registered student for a PhD (Inclusive Education) at the University of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof. A. J. Hugo tel no 012 429 4002/0827385299. In this study I am trying to learn the experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng. Data will be collected by means of interviews, observations and documents. The interviews will not be more than an hour; they will be recorded and later transcribed into verbatim. Data will be kept safely under lock and key for five years after that it will be destroyed. Documents will entail records of learners experiencing barriers, registers and intervention strategies used.

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore the experiences of Learning Support Teachers in supporting Inclusive Education in Gauteng.
2. To find out the factors affecting the implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation phase.
3. To explore the strategies to be used to enhance the implementation of IE by the LSTs in the Foundation phase.

Should you consent to participate in the research, you will be assured of complete confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity; your details will be known to the researcher only. The principles of human dignity, protection against harm, freedom of choice and expression, and your access to information on the research, will be assured.

Participants will be assured of the right to withdraw from the study without harm at any time and they will not be expected to act contrary to their principles. Participants will not incur any costs and you will be informed regarding the progress of research, and will be given feedback in writing once the research has been completed. All the information and data generated through this study will be available by the province, district, the schools and the participants.

You can ask any questions whenever you wish, my contact numbers are 012 429 4758 or 0824313302 or email mahlofd@unisa.ac.za. Completion of the attached consent form will give indication that you agree to take part in the study.

Thanking you in advance.

Francina Dikeledi Mahlo

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

Name:

I hereby give consent to participate in the research study conducted by Mrs F D Mahlo on Experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the Foundation phase, with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng.

I voluntary agree to participate in the study.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX G

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:LSTs

Researcher : Francina Dikeledi Mahlo

Topic : Experiences of Learning Support Teachers in the Foundation phase, with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng

Promoter : Prof A. J Hugo

Participant :.....

Date :.....

Time :.....

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of Inclusive Education?
2. What is your role as a Learning Support Teacher in the Foundation phase?
3. What support do you need to implement Inclusive Education?
4. What strategies could be used to enhance the implementation of Inclusive Education?
5. Is there anything that was not asked but you want the researcher to know?

APPENDIX H

EXAMPLE OF INTEVIEW WITH LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER

D: Afternoon

R: Afternoon

D: The topic of my research is Experiences of Learner Support Teachers with reference to the implementation of Inclusive Education in Gauteng.

D: I just want to ask a few questions that will help me in my study. The first question will be “what are your experiences in the implementation of IE in Gauteng?”

R: I will start defining may be what inclusion is, according to me inclusion is whereby you deal with learners who experience barriers to learning that should be accommodated and be included in school because they do have needs that are different to other learners. They are able to learn but they do have needs that are different, in inclusion you are dealing with children who are despised, rejected, those who are having family problems, those who are unloved and facing challenges and the community put them at school because why I am saying that, because they are labelled and discriminated. They are called by names, “stupid” “you cannot make it”, so with inclusion I know that child can be included only if he gets support from the school even from the district, we can strengthen each other give support so that we can be successful.

D: You mentioned the issue of barriers, what kind of barriers do you experience?

R: They are from the poverty background, others are facing incest problems whereby uncle rape them, the others are facing challenges whereby the mother or the father, or those parents used to fight, and learners are so depressed. I do have a case whereby the mother poured the learner with paraffin, there are so many challenges that these children are facing .The other problem that they are facing, a Grade 3 learner who is responsible for the granny, to bath the granny because the mother has passed away, she is responsible to cook, to clean the house so she becomes a very young woman.

- D: I am interested in this issue of paraffin, what happened then?
- R: The father used to beat the mother on a daily basis so the child was exposed to this thing on a daily basis, so the mother sent the child to buy her, something that they refused, because of the anger of the father beating her, she reacted impulsively then poured paraffin on the child and lit matches but the child went to the hospital but he is alive.
- D: So what do you do when you get this kind of cases?
- R: Since the collaborate with other stakeholders is not easy but I tried to refer the learner to the social worker, we should have a social worker who attends to such cases, a child psychologist, a policeman, so that we can refer them to the professionals.
- D: Do you report to the district about what you experience in your area?
- R: Yes, I do, I report to the district even to the school, but we do not get support from the ISS officials.
- D: So it seems to me that most of the problems that you are dealing with are mostly social problems, how do you deal with those?
- R: Yes, mostly the other learner was possessed in evil spirits, he promised the principal that he is going to break all the windows and that he hates all the teachers. He didn't say anything positive he was always having this negative thoughts and then he said this is my territory I don't want anyone to invade my territory he was very possessed. Then I asked one of the pastors to come and intervene and now the situation is better because now we also involved the parents and the parents went with the child to church and the intervention was successful.
- D: What is your role as LST in the foundation phase?
- R: As an LST, I help them to identify learners, who are experiencing barriers, designing programmes and designing alternative strategies on how to help those identified learners.

- D: When you design this programmes do you involve the teachers?
- R: Yes, I do involve them firstly the identified learner is brought to me and I asses her, so that I can be able to identify which level the learner, is he functioning on a Grade 2 or Grade 1 level so that it can be easier for me to design this programme, so I design the programme according to the level of the child together with the educator.
- D: What tool do you use to assess the learners?
- R: We use the UCT scholastics test, we go to the basics, we do have also the perception more especially for the learners in the foundation phase, they have lot of problems regarding perceptions, the visual perceptions, visual discrimination, visual closure then we design programmes for them and some are like that because they are underage.
- D: What are your experiences with teachers; you design these programmes and go to another school, what happens to those programmes?
- R: Most of them still have this negative attitudes, they only took the programs and put them aside, so I think now that it is a process, learning is a process, some are now interested with what I am doing with the kids, when I am here now everyone wants me in their class to help them and design programmes for them they are now interested in inclusion because they see it is working, they see the learners progressing.
- D: What are your experiences of supporting teachers in the foundation phase?
- R: At first this educators they were not exposed to inclusive Education, hence they had this negative attitude towards it.
- D: What are the challenges that you experience as a LST?
- R: Okay, the first one, finance because we are not budgeted I use my own money for transport, for the phone to liaise with other stakeholders, to travel to the workshops. I use my own money and its taxing for me and the other one is the issue of the level, I am a post level, educator how can I as a level educator expect my seniors to take instructions from me? What is expected from me is that, I must go to schools and tell the HOD and Deputy's that I need to see the 450 forms of

learners who are experiencing barriers and whether they have used the programs that I gave them or not. So how can I address those seniors while I am a post level 1, telling them that do A, B, C, who I am, what cap am I wearing you, understand? It doesn't have any logic, honesty you are my senior but I am expecting you to do 1, 2, 3, and 4. A post level 1 expecting a post level 3 to give her the files of the SBST, checking whether the SBST is functional, whether they are implementing inclusion, there is no logic in fact they should be the ones expecting those things from me because I am a post level 1. But now it is vice versa so it is a challenge and they have this negative attitude of saying "she is a post level 1 what is it that she will tell me?" I am not expecting that a post level one should address me like that, she want things but she is post level one.

D: But do you think that they are so fussy about your post level, or is just your perception?

R: They are they are even talking because in some instances in certain schools you will wait for more than 3 hours getting no attention because they will say who are you it becomes a challenge you are at their school and you need their files, for what? Post level 1 you don't belong to the district, you don't belong to the school so how can you want files from them? Even this thing of belonging is a challenge where do we belong? Another thing is the issue of IQMS.

D: What about it?

R: The way they do IQMS for educators their performance standards does not suit us, their extra curricula activities doesn't suit me, so for me as a LST my extra curricula is whereby I network with other stakeholders you see it's a challenge and they are expecting to be to sit in the classroom to teach the learner, my role is to support not to teach the learner. Immediately I pull out the learner and be in another class with him, I am discriminating the learner, so they are expecting me to pull out the learner, all the learners with barriers to teach them in one class and that is not my role, my role is to support and design alternative intervention strategies.

D: So when you design this intervention strategy do you prefer to do it on individual bases or with a group?

R: Sometimes I support, but because other learners does prefer one to one, they need special attention because we as teachers, in some instances they are in front with that tone voice that make children to be afraid, and then at times they prefer to be supported by peers they understand better when a thing is explained by peers and others prefer one to one.

D: What is the problem with the IQMS?

R: Because here at school they don't know how to do it for me, so they say that my post belong to the district, so they are expecting the district to do IQMS for me , and it is a challenge because district people also don't know because they are not supportive they are not monitoring us, hence they are experiencing difficulties on how to do it, the only time they need us is when they are having pressing issues, they would say LST come and help us in assessing learners, running the 450 workshops even though we do those workshops they don't even come and observe what we are doing, they don't we are all doing different things we don't know whether we are on the right track or not.

D: What kind of support do you need as a LST?

R: Emotional support, why I say this because in my schools I deal with a lot of social problems, like incest so sometimes I get attached to the learner or I make it personal. The learner will tell you my mother is sick, there is no one to take care if me and at home there is nothing, or a learner comes to school with no shoes, no underwear, so you take those issues personal. You need someone to talk to, I need support, so the district people if you tell them there is an emergency they don't care. Like yesterday we were at this thing, they took us out of our schedule to help us to assess learners at a certain school, so if you budgeted that I am not going to use any transport then they say go somewhere, really it is insensitive because now I will be out of budget, so financially we need support you know even us we are human, you need up taking this things personally.

D: Which strategies could be used to enhance the implementation of IE?

R: I think if the district play their role in implementing this inclusion it will be better & involvement of the principals, have you seen that something has weight when it's said by the principal, unlike if it is said by me. I am post level 1, it doesn't have weight, I will listen to what I want to listen, I think if the management can be

empowered about IE and know more about it so that is like a Bible which they say on a daily basis they must know that they need to accommodate this learners, they must love, be available for these learners. It must not only be a burden of LST whereby everything they put it on your shoulders, you are working with 5 to seven schools and the burden of all school they put it on you, at the end of the day they bring you learners with all sorts of problems, they throw them all on you, “wankutlwa” Do you hear me?

D: Do you think teachers are bringing all these problems to you?

R: Because I am a LST, so they bring all the problems to me, not only the academic also the social, the emotional and there are underlying factors that cause barriers to learning. They don't have to look at the symptoms only but they must address the underlying factors also hence if the child is experiencing the emotional & social problems it might cause the academic barriers, so if you can remove that underlying factor or the barrier the learner can perform better in class.

D: What do you think the teachers need to be able to handle this kind of problems?

R: I think they need training in counselling so that even if I am not available they can be able to handle those problems. I think that one of counselling if they can get training on it, it will be of help.

D: Is there anything that was not asked but you need the researcher to know?

R: I think if the Head Office or the people who are more vested in IE can involve those who are on the grassroots because the way I see it, it's only Head Office and district who take decisions. But the people who are hands on, those who are practically implementing are left out, are not empowered and are not capacitated. May be the other thing that causes this is the issue of money on teachers because most of the educators do have honours and degrees in IE and remedial but the thing is they just told themselves that they have done this for their own benefit not for the school because they are not benefiting like the government does not pay them enough so that they can do both.

D: What I am hearing is that most teachers are having degrees in IE but they are not committed, what do you think is the reason for this?

R: May be if there can be more collaboration or that mutual respect between the principals and may be the SMT and the educators, because they know one way or the other if you say I have a qualification in inclusion then they will take all the children experiencing barriers to learning to you, so they rather support only those who are in their classes, than to be expected to support all the learners in the school, so that is a challenge.

D: Is there an SBST here at school?

R: Yes, it is half functional and they sometimes follow the procedures for referrals, that is referring educator must identify the learners and intervene and give support but if the problem still exists, the learner can be sent to the SBST, if they intervened and the problem still exists is then that the learner is referred to me.

D: Above all these challenges, why are you still a LST?

R: Because of the passion of this children and I become more empowered on a daily basis and I encounter different challenges that these children are experiencing. I just want to know more what the cause, why is this child behaving like this, why a sudden change in behaviour. So I just want to learn more hence I have this passion for these kids because our role as teachers is to be lifelong learners, researchers and pastoral, not so?

D: Do you have anything else to say that was not asked?

R: We do not have any resources, I use my own materials, and we only got SBST workshops, there is also the acres of love which feed these learners who are needy. So I've said you personalise this things at the end is you who are sick, so that why last week I didn't come to work, I was sick, seriously. I was sick and when I consulted the doctor said it was tension and stress then he booked me off for a week. You know we are human you look at this things and you keep them in your subconscious mind and later they affect you and they trigger. You know there is no debriefing there is nothing, the teachers will ask you what must we do, they are expecting miracles from you because one way or the other they should have a seminar wherein they take us for debriefing, so that we can just meet and talk about this things, and then we pour our hearts out but they don't do it. Even if it can be two days away from the working place that is the support we need, and just imagine in the schools where there is no LST because we are only two in this

area, so it's impossible to service all the schools. I don't have the car to travel so I use my own money to travel, there is no travelling allowance, I use my cell phone to do official calls really it is so heavy. They can call me now and say I am needed in other school, then because I don't have a car I must use a taxi to that school. And what if on the way I get involved in an accident, who is going to be accountable? Or somebody just grabs me, or hijacks the taxi, who is going to account?

D: And the people from the district do they come & support if you call them?

R: They will tell you that they will come but it's just empty promises, so there is no support, there is no support, let's put it straight, because what does it help, it's us who are suffering. They will tell you they don't have any cars so you must phone so and so, with whose money? With whose phone? When you go to the social worker she will tell you about the demarcations that no I work from here to here so it frustrates you because it is unsolved, so you end up being depressed & you go to sunshine centre for the depressed people and now you are a case.

D: Thank you very much for your time. I hope this information will help me a lot

R: You are welcome.

APPENDIX I

EXAMPLES OF PATTERNS IN THE DATA

The following patterns were identified from the initial analysis.

Key:

DA1L3: Document analysis number one, line number three

OB2L4: Observation number two, line number four

A–G: Interview response from LSTs A to G

P1-P7: Interview response from Principals number one to seven

CT1-CT7: Interview response from Classroom Teachers number one to seven

| UNDERSTANDING DATA SUPPORT | PATTERNS |
|---|---|
| INCLUSIVE EDUCATION | |
| B: "There is a difference between each and every learners, it recognises their potential and that all can learn." | All learners can learn |
| A: "All learners can learn provided they are being given support." | Belief in inclusion |
| P1: "Well that one is a higher grade question, I really do not know (laugh). I don't know if our schools are ready for implementation of IE. We want to do that, but do we have the capacity to do that?" | Schools not ready for implementation |
| P2: "I think IE means to include even the learners that are very slow in education, to accommodate them to give them support also we have got learners who are not well they must be included in the school situation because their mind is still working although they are not in good shape." | Support for learners |
| P2: "Even though learners were physically disabled it did not mean that they were also intellectually disabled." | Supports the idea of inclusion |
| P 3: "Learners are not the same in terms of talents, skills, capabilities." | Skills in learners should be recognised |

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| P4: "Learners academically may not be up to scratch but they have these skills that need to be identified." | Learners have potential |
| B: "There is a difference between each and every learners, it recognises their potential that they all can learn." | Potential of learners |
| F: "I think inclusion is a good idea because each and every learner is unique and learners learn in different ways." | Inclusion is good |
| A: "Is a Policy from White Paper Six whereby that says all learners can learn provided they are being given support in one institution." | support |
| D: "IE is known to everybody, but I don't think is clearer to everyone especially educators, there are learners who are supposed to be included in the mainstream, only to find that those learners are referred to special schools." | Learners are not well placed |
| OB3L5: "there was evidence of five learners who are five years old already in Grade one." | Underage |
| C: "I mean if they have identified that learner they have a tendency of telling themselves that that learner needs to be referred to a special school without any help from them." | No support |
| C: "The teacher picked up four learners and said the following words to the LST in front of the learners "This four are your inclusive learners" | Attitude |
| A: "These two [pointing at them] can't write, read or do mathematics sums and then these two [pointing at them] don't have parents and always their work is incomplete aah.... those one's you can take them and never bring them back because they don't understand anything I say, please just refer them to the special school, I don't think they belong here." | Attitude |
| DA4L5: "There is no evidence that teachers are supporting learners who are experiencing barriers to learning." | No support |
| C: "Those workshops they don't even come and observe what we are doing they don't we are all doing different things we don't know whether we are on the right track or not." | No support |

| RESOURCES | |
|--|---|
| B: "Human resources, that we can all have therapists in the system, we have specialised teachers, yes and material resources, if a child is disabled and he can't walk the school should be able to provide ramps and wheelchairs for the child." | Provision of resources such as human and infrastructure |
| F: "If a child is disabled and he can't walk the school should be able to provide ramps and wheelchairs for the child." | Infrastructure |
| G: "Well like whereby they said aah aah - inclusive education should have those resource person therapists of which we don't have in our schools. We should have a school nurse in, only one local nurse from the local clinic, and who have to move around schools about forty-eight schools at a time, so there is never sufficient manpower with regard to that, and also the implementation part of it really, training for the teachers to implement it." | Human resources |
| A: "We do need the resources, yes the resources." | Resources |
| A: "Resources like chairs and desks to sit on, you know the whole furniture, is also a challenge to these teachers even. If I am going to teach a child about a circle. I am expected that every child in my class have something a circle like but you won't find that." | Resources |
| A: "Good, again it would be maybe manpower if they increase support educators in the district, so far we are only sixteen of us or ten and we are expected to support plus or minus a hundred and forty four schools, including high schools." | Manpower |
| B "That we can have more LSTs because the schools are many; if we can have all the therapists in the system, we have specialised teachers, yes and material resources." In addition, respondent D emphasised the need for therapists in the system: "We can all have therapists in the system, we have specialised teachers." | Manpower |
| C: "We do not have any resources, I use my own materials, and we only got SBST workshops." | Own material used |
| D: "There must be enough resources in the school so that they can be accommodative to those learners because some of them have disabilities, for instance those who are on wheelchairs you find that a school has double storey buildings, it becomes impossible for those learners to move around the | Relevant and appropriate resources |

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| school.” | |
| OB4L2: “There is no evidence of stationery provided; each one uses whatever material available.” | Stationery not available |
| D: “We do not have suitable resources at times you don’t even have stationery to work with...” | Relevant resources |
| LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING | |
| C: “Sometimes the teachers label a learner that he has a barrier only to find that a teacher is Zulu and a learner is Pedi, so it’s obvious the learner will not understand her.” | Language of learning and teaching (LOLT) |
| A: “We have the learners, I usually call them hmmm our cousins from the north, those people who come from Maputo, you know, their language is Shona and some is French and they are here in our schools for the first time and learning Zulu guys’ language, yes I am aware he is able to learn but the language is holding him back.” | LOLT |
| D: “Is not that the learner is retarded or something language breakdown he can’t carry out instructions because he can’t hear you, he can’t understand what you are saying, now at times I will try to talk to them with gestures (showing) sit down” hlala phansi” can you imagine “bala” you know it is so frustrating and now it becomes even worse you find that these learners has other problems besides language it will take time to pick them up.” | LOLT |
| A: “Whereby I said most of the LOLTs, language of teaching and learning, the school is totally different from the learner home language, yes, and usually the parent would prefer this school because they say it is near home, not taking into consideration whether is a Zulu school, you find Pedi in a Zulu.” | LOLT |
| OB1L5: “To the teacher, she does not answer questions or even follow instructions. She comes from Mozambique and at home they only speak Shona.” | LOLT |
| E : “Yaah, you see the problem of language is that schools find themselves forced by policy to say they cannot refuse to register learners who are Sotho speaking when they are in the very same vicinity and then they need to accept those learners and make sure that when they reach a certain number they can apply for human resources so that they can be able to teach those learners their language and those parents always say that the learners are still young they will cope the will learn | LOLT |

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| Zulu, he plays with Zulu kids, sometimes parents have different languages also, the father speaks Tsonga, the mother speaks Xhosa and now the child must come to a Zulu school, it's confusing for the child, so these are the problems we come across." | |
| PARENTS and CAREGIVERS | |
| P1: "The area that is so depressing, parents drink, no parental guidance." | Social problems |
| P2: "So parents in fact they don't understand why their children must, underline must, must go to school, at some stage you visit their homes, yah you will see wonders." | Lack of parental support |
| P3: "You find that a parent goes to work and leaves the learner to look after his siblings, which means that they don't understand the seriousness of this education." | Careful when talking to parents |
| CT2: "Parents need to be taught how to parent their kids, you cannot bring a child in this world and then ignore your responsibility of taking care of that child" | lack of parental support |
| CT3: "If you call the parent to come and discuss the problem of the learner with you, the parent does not come, because they think you are going to tell them that their child is going to fail." | Approach to parents |
| CT7: "Parents are not supportive; they don't even come when you call them to the school, there are some problems which you cannot solve without the parents consent, so the issue of inclusion becomes irrelevant when we look at real practical issues." | Neglect |
| A: "Some of the learners, their parents are not there, they are neglected." | Neglect |
| DA1L4: "There was no evidence of parents' signatures on the registers for parental meetings." | Lack of parental support |
| E: "I am talking about those learners who lives with grannies the parents have passed away, yes we have got such learners at school." | Grandmothers are caring for children |

| LSTS VERSUS DISTRICTS | |
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| E: "We don't know where we belong, and that makes us some other time to say you are in school monitoring, whereas you are not there the belonging issue again" | Confusion about belonging |
| DA3 "There is no signature of a district official or an official stamp to show that the work of LSTs is controlled, for example how many learners does she see per week and does her visit have an impact." | No monitoring |
| E: "The problem of monitoring us, we don't know whether we are doing the correct thing or not doing common things as a team." | No monitoring |
| C: "They are not monitoring us." | No monitoring |
| G: "There is no evidence of the register and reports by the LST." | No control of registers |
| DA1L2: "Every week she planned ahead and informed the schools that she would be coming. She visited mostly two schools which were next to her house the schools were visited three times every month whereas the others were visited once a month." | No control of files |
| G: "We need support from the district, if the district can be seen more frequently, if they can see that the district officials more frequently, jaa, and if people can be may be charged I don't know how because they don't take me seriously, things are done." | Lack of District support |
| A: "We are expected to support from Grade One to Seven, though I was teaching in the Foundation Phase, but our support goes streamline to Grade Twelve, and it's very difficult to support all the schools. I have about seven schools to support." | Many schools to support |
| C: "Because we are servicing many schools even with the assessment, some other time you will be called to high school to give support, so maybe the district will be the one which we can say maybe we belong to them, but those people will say no you do not belong to us." | Many schools to support |
| A: "I am sure when we started this thing I was supposed to support FP only, but we have find situation whereby a learner has already moved from FP to other phases with problems so I am also expected to come in with some kind of support even in high school you find a non-reader there, teachers don't know what to do, then I am called to say what can be done with this learner." | Demarcation of support |
| B: "They don't take this seriously, because the district itself don't take it seriously also, we only have one cluster meeting in three months and the last time we had a meeting of the SBST was second quarter last year [2009], we only had two for the whole year last year so there is no seriousness, even in the district there is no seriousness, even the district officials they only know | Lack of District support |

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| us when they feel like they don't want to go somewhere, and then they will phone you and say go and do that for us, it's not fair." | |
| LST E: "The problem is the other district official from the other units, they don't understand what we do at schools." | Lack of District support |
| G: "I think if the Head Office or the people who are more vested in IE can involve those who are on the grass roots because the way I see it, it's only Head Office and district who take decisions, but the people who are hands on, those who are practically implementing are left out, are not empowered and are not capacitated." | Decision making should include all |
| A: "They are not supportive, they are not monitoring us, and the only time when they need us is when they are having pressing issues." | No monitoring |
| E: "We are dealing with the curriculum people and they are district officials and who need their work to be done in this way and then when you come with yours they put it aside, they do the work of people who are recognised who are known as district officials." | Curriculum officials demands |
| DA2L4: Every week she sent her timetable to various principals of the schools she was serving. She adopted this strategy after realising that at the district level no one cared about her timetables. | Time tables not controlled |
| C: "It is a challenge because district people also don't know because they are not supportive." | Lack of district support |
| F: "They can't waste time to teach a few learners, when the district comes, they monitor activities that are done in class so they want quantity not quality." | Quantity versus Quality |
| C : "Reporting is not a regular thing, at times they ask for the report, at times they don't, at times we phone and tell them about the progress in our work, so nobody is responsible, there is a problem with the system." | No reports |
| A: "Officials that are not doing inclusion they don't even recognise us, they think we are not important like them." | Officials not recognising |
| B: "We don't even have an office at the district, how will they take us seriously? We are not one of them." | No offices |
| D: "We need to have a meeting with district people so that we can explain what we do at schools, it seems they don't know and they don't even care." | No knowledge about LSTs. |
| G: "Ever since 2006 we have been promised this and that, last year we were promised that by the end of the year we will have our | Officials not knowledgeable |

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| own policy that will guide us but up to this day we don't have it so its, promises, promises that are not fulfilled, hence I say I want to quit." | about IE. |
| E: "You must still empower them with knowledge. It should be addressed and their fears also, because at times we lack knowledge, so if we are being empowered you can handle issues differently." | Training |
| G: "We need support from the district, if the district can be seen more frequently." | Support |
| P4: "Not much really, except that we give them these problems say please do your best help us, we normally do not help them, we expect them to help us, the only help we can give is the monitoring assistant, you know run to the district and do this but with budgetary constraints cause the school is a no fee school and the government allocation doesn't give you any money for transport, we have to sell kip kip (pop corn) in order to raise money for transport, sometimes she needs money for transport and then you find that the school doesn't have the money for transport and these funds that you get from government you cannot take and use them for transport, otherwise you go for disciplinary hearing because you have to account for such funds." | Support for LSTs |
| SOCIAL PROBLEMS | |
| A: "Others are abused, others are raped, their social life is terrible, and so it affects their learning in the classroom." | Social problems. |
| P2: "The mother is unemployed, there is no father figure and the mother has just got a newly born baby, it was just a week so she does not have time to ensure that the kid comes to school ready for education." | Social problems |
| D: "They are from poverty backgrounds, others are facing incest problems, whereby an uncle rapes them, parents are fighting." | Social problems |
| CT2: "Most of our learners experience problems whereby parents always fight, and the learner is always thinking about what is happening in the house so they do not even hear what you are teaching in class, so the LST come and talk to those learners." | Social problems |
| CT6: "Yes, in some cases you find that the learner is bullying others, you need to refer that learner to the counsellor. Learners who are naughty stealing others possessions, then you will find that those learners may not get love from home, so LSTs helps us | Social problems |

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| there, because we don't know what to do in such cases." | |
| F: "My main purpose is to assist learners with barriers in learning but there are those social problems I have to deal with." | Social problems |
| B: "You are invited to help schools not even with learning problems but with social problems" | Social problems |
| P4: "Problems they seem to emanate from the social background so they the LSTs usually give assistance in terms of that." | Social problems |
| E: "Yes, in some cases you find that the learner is bullying others, you need to refer that that learner to the counsellor. Learners who are naughty stealing others possessions, then you will find that those learners may not get love from home, it different with the barriers that can be associated with academic." | Social problems |
| P1: "Learners who had been raped, abused , sometimes we don't even know what to do , where to start with the case, how do we handle the child, how do you ask the child, how do you handle the child so she always help us." | Social problems |
| G: "I was saying if your time table says you are in school and they called you to go to school B. For example for a serious case like rape, they call us LST instead of referring that learner may be to social workers and to the police they say no come we are having a problem then you rush there." | Social problems |
| LEARNERS' HOME CIRCUMSTANCES | |
| D: "Poverty in learners, most of them come from disadvantaged homes, both parents are unemployed, and they stay far from the school, in shacks, they walk long distances to school, they come to school without eating, so such learners can't cope well in class." | Poverty |
| G: "Yah, the learners most of them, you know this HIV problem has affected so many learners in our schools and you find that they live alone at home without an adult. Learners are orphaned" | HIV/AIDS |
| D: "They are from the poverty background, others are facing incest problems whereby uncle rape them, the others are facing challenges whereby the mother of the father, or those parents used to fight, and learners are so depressed." | Poverty |
| E: "You are invited to help schools not even with learning problems but with social problems." | |

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| B: | “Grade 3 learner who is responsible for the granny, to wash the granny because the mother has passed away, she is responsible to cook, to clean the house so she becomes a very young woman.” | Learners assuming adult roles |
| C: | “The learner will tell you my mother is sick, there is no one to take care if me and at home there is nothing, or a learner comes to school with no shoes, no underwear, so you take them personal.” | Poverty |
| C: | “You need someone to talk to, I need support, so the district people if you tell them there is an emergency they don’t care.” | Support |
| D: | “I know that a child can be included only if he gets support from the school and the district.” | Inclusion possible if there is support |
| B: | “So after identifying these learners I help them develop an individualised support programme for the learner to address the identified barriers.” | Support teachers |
| OB5L2: | “LSTs sat down with the teacher designed individual programmes for learners experiencing spelling problems.” | Accommodate learners |
| B | “So in the case of learning disability, we have to identify the severity of the disability in kids, then we tone down the curriculum and give them remedial assistance by a professional.” | Support for learners |
| F: | “For those who can’t learn fast we need to give them support so that they can be able to apply their ability.” | Individual attention |
| G: | “Sometimes I support, but because other learners does prefer one to one, they need special attention because we as teachers, in some instances they are in front with that tone voice that make children to be afraid” | Individual attention |

| FINANCIAL PROBLEMS | |
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| F: "You know transport money, we have to phone the schools, to type, and sometimes when I go to workshops I use my own money." | Financial support |
| F: "They will tell you they don't have any cars so you must phone so and so, with whose money?" | Transport |
| F: "We go around schools in the townships with our own cars, we are supposed to use the Departments car, as it is now we are supposed to go for a workshop tomorrow but nobody wants to account for our transport money, there are so many challenges." | Transport |
| B: "I don't have the car to travel so I use my own money to travel, there is no travelling allowance. I use my cell phone to do official calls really it is so heavy." | Transport |
| F "My main problem now, I don't have transport and I spend too much money on transport and I use my money. No one, no one is sponsoring me." | Transport |
| D: "Okay, the first problem is finance because we are not budgeted I use my own money for transport, for the phone to liaise with other stakeholders, to travel to the workshops, I use my own money and it's taxing for me." | Finance |
| A: "Yes and am using my own car, at times I have to speak to other schools whereby there is an emergency, I use my own phone and at the same time our level was never taken into consideration when the post was being established." | Financial support |
| E: "Sometimes when I have to support, I can't give support because I become emotional and I feel like I can't take this anymore, because sometimes I feel like running away from the problem, because they are too much and they are unsolved, they are so unsolved so it is better to like, even if I try, it becomes so difficult because they are so many that they are unsolved, so at times it's better not to know." | Emotional support |
| D: "Reporting is not a regular thing at times they ask for the report, at times they don't, at times we phone and tell them about the progress in our work, so nobody is responsible, there is a problem with the system" | Way of reporting |

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| LARGE CLASSES | |
| F: "They will tell you they don't have time to help learners with problems, they have got so many learners." | Many learners in class |
| P2: "The teachers will tell you, how I am going to identify a learner who has problems out fifty five learners?" | Overcrowding |
| P2: "I understand that now we must have a strategy of how to do deal with those learners in class, I don't want to tell lies, when you look at the 58 and you look at the content focus that you must focus on, the one." | Workload for teachers |
| P3: "Our biggest problem is overcrowding." | Overcrowding |
| D: "If we have small number of learners in a class, so that maybe the end product will be what is expected because of the greater number in classes is not easy to implement I.E." | Large classes |
| A: "They are expecting me to move around the schools, yaah, for instance I have fifteen schools under my care right now | Many schools to service |
| C: "I am a teacher supporting Foundation Phase schools in a township but there is overcrowding there of which is not going to go way any time soon, so if really I have to give support to a learner as individual attention the word again doesn't imply meaning in that situation individual attention is never you know practicable in a situation of overcrowded classroom." | Overcrowding |
| E: "It is not easy to say, how it can be done as I said there are many excuses, number of learner's, overcrowding in the classes they could not attend to one learner, instead of teaching forty-five or fifty learners." | Number of learners |
| D: "If I had to say that and also some issues is about material resources like for instance, more especially, I am a teacher supporting Foundation Phase schools in a township, but there is overcrowding, there of which is not going to go away any time soon, so if really I have to give support to a learner as individual attention the word again doesn't imply meaning in that situation, individual attention is never, you know, practicable in a situation of overcrowded classroom." | Overcrowding |
| G: "If you explain to the teachers the steps that I use, they will tell you that they don't have time to do that. I've got so many learners I have to attend to and the class can't stand and waste time only to teach a few." | Many learners |

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| F: | “They enter school at an early age, and you find that they are not well developed, with the kind of teachers we have, they don’t understand how to support those learners.” | Underage learners |
| D: | “The common barrier in the learners is age, they are underage, because of the policy that was introduced which says the learner who is five or five and half can go to school” | Underage learners |
| E: | “We design an IEP you will find that the programme was left there on top of the cupboard with dust on it, no support from teachers, it was not even tried to see if that learner can be helped, so it means those strategies of yours will end up in that paper” | No commitment |
| A: | “Then you can give that work some are willing to try it, you know teachers in fact it goes per individual some are happy to do it, some says no it work some says I don’t have time you know teachers.” | No commitment |
| C: | “Most of the educators do have honours and degrees in IE and remedial but the thing is they just told themselves that they have done this for their own benefit not for the school because they are not benefiting like the government does not pay them enough so that they can do both.” | Teachers hiding their qualifications |
| A: | “You know I think before it can fully be implemented hundred percent we should have to deal with those attitudes, I will say attitudes and fear is maybe and how do you do that.” | Attitudes |
| D: | “But you know teachers, when we arrive at schools, they just take a learner with a physical problem and take the learner to the LST without even assessing what the learner.” | Attitude of teachers |
| G: | “At times when I go and ask for learners, it’s like we are busy, we are busy then they hide learners with barriers and when I come and do follow up they run away from doing the actual job, they don’t want to refer because, its only when they want to write the support forms” | Attitudes of teachers |
| G: | “You know if teachers were to do their work I think that will make my job easier, because now they send the child to me okay and I give support and next time I come I find whatever I have done, being in that way & even if I want to take the child further I can’t because I will see the child today and maybe I will see the child after two or three weeks and the support is not enough “ | Commitment of teachers |

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| F: | “The other LSTs from other districts gets a mandate from the district, they are now in their organogram, and they are given money when they attend workshops.” | No uniformity in districts (depends on the district management) |
| A: | “We have four clusters and each one of us work on their own, even though we are here in the same district, we do not work the same, we work differently especially in terms of assessment | No Uniformity |
| D: | “As a province somewhere people are doing something different, so we do not work the same way as LSTs” | Commonality/uniformity |
| C: | “We need a common way of assessing, common way of supporting learners and a common way of doing IEP, common way of reporting...” | Many schools to support |
| TRAINING | | |
| D: | “Some principals are still difficult they do not understand this inclusion thing.” | Training for principals on inclusive education |
| B: | “We must workshop them to understand the WP6 because maybe they are doing it because they don’t understand it and the teachers also they must be workshopped” | Training |
| P1: | “Workshops, seminars on regular basis so that educators that it is not isolated. If I had the money I will take all my teachers to register IE, not only from Department but also a buy in from educators to study IE.” | Training |
| P5: | “So you find that sometimes we don’t even fill in this support forms because we don’t know exactly what are we supposed to fill in.” | Training |
| P4: | “Everyone should be able to answer questions about IE or anything that is happening.” | Training everyone |
| P2: | “A school is, the core business of the school is teaching and learning because we want to enhance the performance of learner but should not work in silos with our admin silos with our admin staff.” | Train admin staff |
| P1: | “General workers are not so much involved, they should know about Inclusive Education.” | Training general workers |
| P3: | “Teachers need to be trained, because we were never trained in these Inclusive Educations, we are only told there is inclusive, you must do this and that and you find that we don’t | Training |

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| have that passion because we do not know how to deal with these children.” | |
| P3: “Administrators are the face of the schools, so they should be work shopped around the question of inclusivity.” | Train administrators on IE |
| P4: “As principals we need training, we really need training on this really because we talk inclusion, inclusion means different things, different problems that needs to be addressed, how as a principal am I going to know how the teachers must support the child in class, the teachers have those different learners in different classes not that SBST coordinator must be knowledgeable I think all educators.” | Training |
| D: “Each and every school, a teacher must be encouraged to do this inclusion so that they can be more understanding because they cannot deal with these learners if they don’t know what the barriers is.” | Motivation for teachers to register |
| CT4: “Sometimes you find that you suspect a learner in your class has been abused, how do you then talk to that learner, seriously you need skills to do that without offending the learner.” | More challenging problems |
| CT5: “The problem is that when the LST is still rotating in the other schools, if your turn for that week has passed you will see her maybe after two weeks, so what about the poor learner? It means she must wait until she comes back, so it’s better if we are trained also that we can help during emergencies.” | Expectations on LSTs |
| CT6: “We went for training only once, we need more training on this inclusive education so that we can implement it correctly, for now what we are doing is just trial and error.” | Empowerment of teachers |
| C: “I think they need training in counseling so that even if I am not available they can be able to handle those problems.” | Training of teachers |
| B: “Workshops are very important because we must be informed; when we get to schools people expect us to know everything.” | Workshop teachers |
| EMOTIONAL SUPPORT | |
| F: “I feel like quitting they don’t take us seriously, because the district itself don’t take it seriously, the district officials only knows us when they don’t feel like going somewhere.” | Emotional support issues |
| B: “Emotional support, why I say this because in my schools I deal with a lot of social problems, like incest, so sometimes I get | Emotional support |

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| attached to the learner or I make it personal.” | |
| D: “More than and you know sometimes when I have to support, I can’t give support because I become emotional and I feel like I can’t take this anymore, because sometimes I feel like running away from the problem, because they are too much and they are unsolved, they are so unsolved so it is better to like, even if I try, it becomes so difficult because they are so many that they are unsolved, so at times it’s better not to know.” | Emotional support |
| B: “They will tell you when we are going to implement those strategies district curriculum people will want activities in a term.” | Expectations on teachers by districts |
| C: “They will tell you they don’t have any cars so you must phone so and so, with whose money?” | Financial support |
| E: “They will tell you that you are a LST, we are having the curriculum people who want the curriculum to be finished.” | Inclusion is treated as an add on to curriculum |
| D: “You know it makes you to be emotional when you think about them, there are so many things, people get promoted to the district, and they are seconded without us knowing.” | Promotions |
| B: “It’s so helpful, because at times you find a child without a uniform and you take them sometimes personally and you know you take it upon yourself to help him.” | Attachment to learners |
| F: “Sometimes I can’t give support because I become emotional and I feel like I can’t take this anymore, because sometimes I feel like running away from the problem, because they are too much and they are unsolved.” | Problems difficult to solve |
| A: “At times when I go and ask for learners, it’s like we are busy, we are busy then they hide learners with barriers and when I come and do follow up they run away from doing the actual job, they don’t want to refer because, its only when they want to write the support forms.” | No commitment from teachers |
| G: “I feel like quitting, I feel like quitting you know if your job is considered now as being an assistant to whoever, so if there is anything that needs to be done at the district call them, let them come and do it.” | Demoralised |
| C: “Emotional support, why I say this because in my schools I deal with a lot of social problems, like incest so sometimes I get attached to the learner or I make it personal.” | Problems not solved |

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| F: "You personalise this things at the end is you who are sick, so that why last week I didn't come to work, I was sick, seriously I was sick and when I consulted the doctor said it was tension then he booked me off for a week." | Too many problems for the LSTs |
| E: "They should have a seminar wherein they take us for debriefing, so that we can just meet and talk about this things, and then we pour our hearts out but they don't do it." | Debriefing |
| ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES | |
| B: "I help them to administer the assessment, usually prefer curriculum based assessment because it is easy to interpret." | Different Assessment techniques |
| E: "In Foundation Phase the tool that we use is letter identification, the 26 letters, to check if the learners know how to sound it or they know the names." | Different assessment techniques |
| E: "Because I can do assessment of basics in the Foundation Phase the other one is doing the whole reading uniformity, we are not doing the common thing." | No uniformity |
| D: "Is a diagnostic assessment we asses learners in the Foundation Phase in their mother tongue and a little bit of English and Maths." | No uniformity |
| C: "We use the UCT scholastics test, we go to the basics." | Different assessment techniques |
| A "Some things are good on paper, but the implementation part of it, like where they say inclusive education should have resources." | Implementation is a problem |
| D: "So that', why at the beginning I said inclusion is there by the word but when coming for the real practical implementation is a problem." | Implementation is a problem |
| F: "Most of South African policies are good on paper but the implementation is a huge challenge." | Implementation is a problem |
| D "Those workshops they don't even come and observe what we are doing, they don't. We are all doing different things, we don't know whether we are on the right track or not." | Support |
| E: "Aeeh, in Foundation Phase the tool that we use is letter identification, the twenty-six letters, to check if the learners know how to sound it or they know the names, then we mark those letters that are spelled correctly, thereafter we come to | Assessment technique |

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| | building of the letter and words, because others they sound and combine it they have got a problem with it.” | |
| E: | “Because most people don’t care if they are getting paid at the end of the month they don’t care of the learners whether they are getting the correct education or what teachers don’t care.” | Lack of commitment |
| C: | “I think if the districts play their role in implementing this inclusion because and involvement of the principals, have you seen that if something it has weight.” | District support |
| C: | “I think if the Head Office or the people who are more vested in IE can involve those who are on the grass root because the way I see it, it’s only Head Office and district who take decisions, but the people who are hands on, those who are practically implementing are left out, are not empowered and are not capacitated.” | Involve other stakeholders in decision making |
| B: | “The real practical implementation is a problem when in discussion with them many people believe that remedial education which was phased out they, prefer it to come back.” | Implementation problems |
| E: | “They will tell you that you are a LST, we are having the curriculum people who want the curriculum to be finished.” | No command of authority |
| F: | “Especially because we are post level 1 so they feel that they don’t need to listen to us that’s why they are having that attitude again of saying who are you to tell us what to do and when to do it?” | Low Post level |
| E: | “As it is now we are on post level one, but now we are supposed to go there and address principals and deputy principals, they don’t even look at us at times because of the post level ...” | Cannot command authority |
| B: | “The post level is very low for the work that we are doing.” | Post level not equated to the workload |
| G: | “One other thing, as a mere teacher, there is an HOD, Deputy Principal, who am I to tell the HOD, do this, that’s when attitudes will surface.” | Post level |
| E: | “The post level, moving from one school to another with our own cars, our own petrol, the belonging issue.” | Unable to command authority |
| C: | “Unlike if it is said by me, I am post level 1, it doesn’t have weight, I will listen to whoever I want to listen.” | Unable to command authority |

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| B: | “Recognition from the district, or not from the district but from the Head office.”” | Recognition |
| DISTRICT SUPPORT | | |
| C: | “The District will say no at least let it be five learners failing and the rest let them go to Grade 2 with their problems and at the same time that is my problem because I have to deal with them they are now in Grade 2 with the backlog.” | Quantity versus quality |
| A: | “The district people don’t integrate it (IE) in the curriculum, yes, they don’t support us.” | District support |
| G: | “They don’t take this seriously, because the district itself don’t take it seriously also, we only have one cluster meeting in 3 months and the last time we had a meeting of the SBST was second quarter last year [2009].” | Commitment from the district |
| C: | “It is a challenge because district people also don’t know because they are not supportive.” | District support |
| F: | “The district must intervene, the district must intervene so they can take us seriously.” | Absence of guidelines |
| B: | “ There are no guidelines, policies that governs this LST thing, seemingly everyone is subjective about how to handle this thing” | No guidelines |
| F: | “Officials do not know what we are doing, they ask us to write what we do, they are the people who are supposed to know what we are doing” | Lack of knowledge from district people |
| G | “Ever since 2006 we have been promised, this & that last year we were promised that by the end of the year we will have our own policy that will guide us but up to this day we don’t have it so its, promises, promises.” | Guidelines |
| A: | “We tone down the curriculum and give them maybe remedial assistance by a professional I said we have specialised teachers in dealing with the learners.” | Adaptation of the curriculum |
| G: | “Much there are frustrations, there are some incentives not having not having a class, not having a district official coming and ask for this & that, you know if I can have my own class and deal with those learners in my own class I will be the happiest person” | Positive things about the job |

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| G: | “Educators were not exposed to inclusive Education; hence they had this negative attitude.” | Negative attitudes |
| C: | “I become more empowered on a daily basis and I encounter different challenges that these children are experiencing.” | Positive about the job |
| E: | “The problem is that we are not even in their organogram.” | Organogram |
| E: | “I have seen in other districts, LST are in the other districts organogram but here, in our district we are not there, but we are invited to DBST meetings, there is no uniformity among the districts, the other district is doing this, the other one is doing that” | No uniformity in districts |
| IQMS(INTERGRATED QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM) | | |
| E: | “Even with the IQMS we are having a problem of where to do it so as a team we do it for ourselves because in schools they said no you are doing our job, in district they will say no we are doing office work, you are not doing office work you are doing field work, so we are in between, we are not sure where we belong.” | Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) |
| P5: | “In fact we are working very well with the support teacher, they are district based right, but I am not sure who is supposed to do her IQMS, you see because her key performance areas are not like the teachers in class, now the district sometimes tell them go to your principals for IQMS, but you find that sometimes is more than six principals, how should we do it?” | IQMS |
| B: | “Every year we are having that problem because in most cases you find that they need scores and we are not aware because we are busy moving from one school to another, then we need to sit down do it haphazardly then take it to HR people who needs it and it’s not a true reflection of everything they take it and submit it where it is supposed to be submitted.” | IQMS problems |
| G: | “IQMS there are, the way they do IQMS for educators their performance standards does not suit us, their extra curricula activities doesn’t suit me, so for me as a LST my extra curricula is whereby I network with other stakeholders you see it’s a challenge and they are expecting to be to sit in the classroom to teach the learner, my role is to support not to teach the learner.” | IQMS is a challenge |

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| D: "The development appraisal is a problem, because school principals do not want to do it because they say we do not understand the way you work and the district say go to your principals to do IQMS." | IQMS challenge |
| G: "So you know, it's hurting, I don't need her in my school anymore and the IQMS thing, they can't do it, they tell you go to the district because you don't belong to me" | IQMS challenge |
| E: "Learners having problem of the basics of reading, where you need to start with the basic sounds." | Reading problems |
| FUNCTIONALITY OF SBST | |
| P1: "If SBST is functional then IE will work, because the SBST it receives or it gets all the conditions that needs to be addressed but basically the schools, for example the learners they get the food, if they don't receive it at home, number two the issue of uniform, number three the socio-economic factors that affect the child, they do some workshops for educators we usually gives them a slot during the parents meeting just to indicate or show the seriousness or importance of education." | Language of learning and Teaching (LOLT) |
| P2: "The SBST if functional, that is a step towards the implementation of IE you can hear from what I have already said." | SBST |
| P7: "How do you then refer a learner if you don't know the shortcomings? You should have evidence that you identified the shortcomings of the learner you have done something about it in terms of support you also have spoken to the SBST committee, you also speak and a mediate the matter parent, then that way, the implementation will run smoothly." | SBST functionaility |
| P3: "SBST sometimes doesn't have time to address all the schools problems at once because now we want everything to go forward and it is already late but if the SBST is utilised correctly I think inclusion will work." | Workload of the SBST |
| INTERVENTION STRATEGIES | |
| CT2: "Sometimes we want to help but it is not easy when you do not know how to help, so the intervention strategies help us a lot." | Programmes |
| OB1L4: "During the spelling test, she could not pronounce even a single word; the LST pronounced the words and let Mbali pronounced the words after her." | Strategies that the teacher don't know |

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| OB2L2: "During his session, LSTs used cards to assess his spelling skills and level of functioning, the learner was given cards with pictures and he was supposed to identify the picture and then guess what is on the picture." | Strategies that the teacher don't know |
| CT6: "They actually try and assist learners as well as the educators with programmes that is creating programs for those learners who lack behind in their work and things like that, so those programmes you find that some teachers did not know them." | Support to teachers |
| COLLABORATION | |
| C : "We can strengthen each other give support so that we can be successful." | Collaboration |
| A: "It's very frustrating, it's very frustrating really because you know like I said I would recommend that this child should be retained at least to develop this language and here comes the district official from the curriculum department saying the policy says the learner cannot be retained based on language, you know we are doing two different things and where is the teacher, the poor teacher?" | Collaboration |
| E: "Since I need to collaborate with other stakeholders, I do not have a reliable social worker who attends to such cases, I do not have a child psychologist, I do not have a policeman, so for these cases that I cannot handle I should refer them to the professionals." | Interdepartmental collaboration |
| A: "I think the other thing that we need is training in all spheres because we are expected to do so much like counselling of kids." We have done crash courses on counselling of which I am not happy about it whereby maybe you will find a child who wanted to commit suicide and you don't even know how to tackle such issues." | Interdepartmental collaboration |
| E: "For example for a serious case like rape, they call us LSTs instead of referring that learner may be to social workers and to the police they say no come we are having a problem then you rush there." | Collaboration with other departments |
| C: "There is also 'the Acres of Love' [NGO] which feed these learners who are needy." | Collaboration with NGOs |
| A: "Why am I saying that? You know usually I will be invited to churches where they usually say: say something about education and they usually do this at the beginning of the year when everyone is happy with the new year and everything, | Collaboration with other departments |

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <p>and when I talk to the them about learning more especially learning disability you know, you see people are aware but they don't know what is this, why am I supposed to do?"</p> | |
| <p>B: "There is this hierarchy thing in the district, I know, you know someone think that she is an official she won't sit in this meeting with a LST so it was tough, whereby a meeting was called and we find all the LST being there and no one else, I don't know."</p> | <p>Hierachies</p> |
| <p>C: "There are many different kinds of units, I have seen there is no link there, ISS, inclusion and special schools, no linkage with other units and I think there must be some kind of communication since well as we are learning support or inclusive, we are busy dealing curriculum people issues. I think the curriculum people must be on board about what's happening, if I say a teacher must modify the curriculum what is supposed to be done there? We need to work together, really with these units assessment, inclusion you know yes."</p> | <p>Collaboration between units</p> |

APPENDIX J

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF LANGUAGE EDITING

Date: Thursday, 08 December 2011

This is to certify that language editing has been carried out on the following

doctoral thesis:

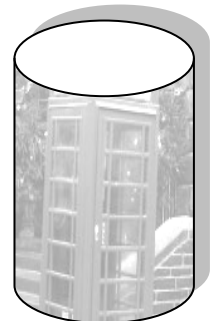
***EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE,
WITH REFERENCE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN
GAUTENG***

by

FRANCINA DIKELEDI MAHLO

Language Editing was carried out to appropriate academic standards, including syntax,
grammar and style

Andrew Graham (BA, MA dist., PhD, University of Keele, UK)*
011 475 6724
073 469 5014
happy4andrew@hotmail.com



*Former Tutor in Postgraduate Writing Centre and Managing Editor of ISI Accredited Journal