PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PROVIDING LEARNING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

By

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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APRIL 2016

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Velma Dianne Wentzel, declare that **PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PROVIDING LEARNING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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VELMA DIANNE WENTZEL   **DATE**

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the hundreds of learners with barriers to learning in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth, who go unnoticed.

Every child deserves a

champion:

an adult who will

never give up

on them, who understands the power of

connection

and insists that they

become

the best that they can possibly

be.

Rita F. Pierson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my Heavenly Father, I have no words in describing my sincere gratitude for the wisdom and guidance that was bestowed upon me throughout my studies. Without my Saviour, Jesus Christ, I would not have been able to accomplish this.

To my supervisor, Dr. Mubi Mavuso, for her continuous support, guidance, advice, patience and encouragement. It was a great pleasure working with you.

To my dearest husband, Havidt Wentzel, for his encouragement, support and motivation throughout my studies. You have been my greatest supporter.

My children and my two mothers: your patience and support were remarkable.

My friends, who guided and assisted me throughout this study, and my colleagues from all participating schools for their assistance and participation in this study: without you, it would have been a futile exercise.

My editors, Ms Marthie Nel and Martie Gummow, for editing my dissertation.

A special thank you to Taryn Bouah, for her unselfish contribution and tireless assistance and support.

SUMMARY

This research focuses on the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. In South Africa, most learners attend in mainstream schools. Mainstream schools are expected to support learners inclusively. However, most teachers seem challenged to address the learning needs such as those experienced by learners with mild intellectual disabilities.

The research was conducted by means of interviews with selected participants over a period of approximately four months. Data was also obtained through the analysis of records such as learners' workbooks, test books, support forms used by teachers to record their observation and field notes which were reflected in a journal. Interviews and transcriptions were typed out verbatim.

The research produced a number of key findings and concluded that many teachers lack sufficient training to identify and address barriers to learning, especially those with mild intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, the study revealed that support structures at participating research schools seem to be non-functional, and guidance and assistance from the Department of Education is minimal. The findings were used to propose recommendations that could be used by primary school teachers to support learners with mild intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools.

Key words:
Barriers to learning; inclusive education; learning support; mild intellectual disabilities

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy
CDS	Curriculum Development and Support
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District-based Support Team
DoE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FAS	Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
IE	Inclusive Education
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ILST	Institution Level Support Team
ISP	Individual Support Plan
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MID	Mild Intellectual Disabilities
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
SBST	School-based Support Team
SIAS	Strategy for Identification, Assessment and Support

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CHAPTER ONE
AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION INCLUDING BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Education White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education: Building Inclusive education and Training systems (EWP6) was launched as a policy on Inclusion which spells out how barriers to learning should be removed from and how inclusive education should be gradually introduced into the entire education system in 2001 (DoE, 2001). Furthermore, EWP6 proposes that in an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services will be created in line with what learners with disabilities require. This means that learners who require low-intensive support will receive learning support in ordinary schools and those requiring moderate support will receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools (DoE, 2001:15).

To strengthen EWP6 (DoE, 2001), as enhancing the learning support, additional policies and guidelines such as the National Strategy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DBE, 2008a, 2014), concessions guidelines (DBE, 2010) and the guidelines for inclusive teaching and learning (DBE, 2010) have been introduced. In addition to policies and guidelines, the Department of Education introduces school based structures such as the School Based Support Teams (SBST's) and School Assessment Teams (SAT's) (DoE, 2001, DoE, 2005). The view of establishing SBST's and SAT's is to ensure that knowledge and skills are disseminated amongst educators to ensure that a greater sense of understanding is evoked when dealing with learners who present with learning barriers.

Vogel (2011:4) supports the view of collaboration amongst teachers but contends that if teachers are actively supported and given the opportunity to share their expertise with others, they will be able to create a rich educational opportunity for all learners.

For Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009:491) the education system of South Africa showed remarkable change over the last couple of years of democracy as human rights became the cornerstone of the South Africa's policy imperatives, extending it to include the right to education, free of discrimination and prejudice.

While the world moved towards inclusive education, South Africa moved towards democracy, culminating in a new Constitution in 1996 and a Bill of Rights outlining the right to access quality education (Garner, 2009:73).

The inclusion of learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools, including those with specific learning difficulties, such as mild to severe intellectual difficulties, in primary and post-primary schools has been one of the key policy aims of governments since the latter stages of the twentieth century (Kerins, 2013:1). Kerins (2013:1) furthermore mentions that, despite this, there is evidence of an increase in the number of learners with Mild General Learning Disabilities (MGLDs) leaving mainstream schools and transferring to special schools.

The focus on the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning is not uniquely South African. At a world conference on special needs education in Salamanca, Spain in 1994, almost 100 countries and many international organisations took part. Representatives of different countries called for the inclusion of all children in mainstream schools and hailed inclusive education as the only universally accepted approach (Garner, 2009:70).

Ellis, Tod and Graham-Mattheson (2008:23) contend that the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was a distinct catalyst for much subsequent educational policy within the United Kingdom (UK), with the focus on developing more inclusive practices in schools. Woolfolk (2007:156) writes that in the United States of America, the individual with Disability Education Improvement Act (IDEA), amended in 2003, allows for learners with disabilities to access the general education curriculum through individual accommodation.

Vogel (2011:3) states that in a school where there is inclusion, a teacher shares

responsibility for a diversity of learners with the learning support teacher in that school and with other support staff (education support services of districts, special schools, etc.) in order to teach all learners.

The current study focuses on the primary school teachers' experiences of providing learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities (MID's). The largest group of learners who are affected in the range of learners, who might be considered as experiencing intellectual disability, are those who are diagnosed with MID's, contend Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010:314). Such learners are generally able to learn basic scholastic skills, although there is usually a limit to what they can achieve at higher levels of schooling. When their disabilities go unnoticed, the learners are often labelled as lazy, disruptive or disobedient. As Donald *et al.* (2010:314) advise the act of naming learners can be very damaging and discouraging.

For the purpose of this study, I will refer to learners with MID as those who require assistance and support in the mainstream school in order to acquire the necessary, basic academic skills and knowledge. Many of these learners go unnoticed at school unless they have been diagnosed by a qualified psychologist so that they can be placed in the learner support class where they can receive the necessary intervention and support, even though learners in mainstream schools should be supported inclusively.

I am a primary school remedial teacher, with 29 years overall teaching experience. Of these, I spent 11 years teaching learners with barriers to learning. Although trained in remedial education, I provide learning support as guided by inclusive education principles and processes embraced in EWP6 (DoE, 2001) as a guiding policy for teachers at South African schools. As a teacher, I have observed that most learners who present with MID's consistently perform very poorly due to difficulties in a number of areas. The areas in which such learners seem to experience difficulties include socialisation, poor concentration, handwriting, reading, comprehension and mathematics. In my observations it has become apparent to me that learners are promoted without their difficulties being adequately assessed, addressed and

supported. This means that they end up in the intermediate and senior phases still working on foundation phase levels, some as far back as Grade One. Due to frustration and repeated failure, most learners then drop out of school and venture into drug abuse or gangster activities.

In addition, as a result of the abovementioned factors – especially social and environmental factors – the learners lack the ability to deal with the current South African curriculum called the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011). As advised by Variend (2011:1), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) curriculum review had the aim of lessening the administrative load on teachers and ensuring that there is clear guidance and consistency for teachers when teaching.

Although such policies are in place, teachers in South Africa seem to experience difficulties in supporting learners with MID's inclusively. My observation is that classroom sizes make it impossible for teachers to support learners on an individual basis. Furthermore, most teachers are not qualified or trained in providing support for learners with MID's. My view is supported by Khan and Iqbal (2012:10164), who concluded in their study on ""*overcrowded classrooms: a serious problem for teachers"* that most of the teachers struggle to pay attention to each and every student in their overcrowded classrooms. They could not spare a single minute to provide extra help to weak students. Mavuso (2015:193) also highlights that overcrowded classes is a barrier to providing learning support.

Many schools in South Africa, including selected schools in this research, experience diversity. In addition, language barriers also seem to be a challenge, especially when learners are introduced to a foreign language such as English for the first time as their language of learning and teaching (LOLT). Resources and infrastructure to maintain a good level of education are lacking. The CAPS curriculum itself is loaded and teachers feel that teaching time has been eroded by the many assessments that have to be performed.

Researchers such as Pillay and Terlizzi (2009:507) argue that the full

implementation of inclusive education in South Africa at this stage requires greater economic investment and greater consideration of the ecological system and resilience of the learner, arguing that the present government has allocated more funding for education so that resources could be mobilised and used to the benefit of these learners with barriers to learning.

1.2   RATIONALE BEHIND STUDY

The motivation for doing this research was my experience at one of the participating research schools regarding learners with barriers to learning. Since the inception of the school in 1968, it has hosted learners with mild to severe intellectual barriers, who used their own curriculum. It was one of a few mainstream schools to have the then called adaptation classes. These classes and the teachers were equipped to meet the needs of learners with mild to severe intellectual disabilities. The latter refers to learners who are unable to progress academically without specialised programmes which in turn would provide high levels of support to these learners, as well as emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, as most of the teachers were qualified remedial teachers.

Classes were small in number, with a ratio of one teacher to fifteen learners, so that learners received individual attention, which resulted in good academic progress. The learners were skilled in gardening activities, needlework, cane, clay and wickerwork projects, and their handwork displayed and sold. During the late 1990's, these adaptation classes were terminated to make way for inclusive education. The learners with barriers to learning, such as MID's, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD), were now integrated into the mainstream classes, with the view that they should be supported inclusively. Currently, learners enrolled at the school are being assessed through psychometric tests, performed externally. Psychometric tests are not essential for accommodating learners in a mainstream school, as per policy guidelines. The SIAS document (Department of Education, 2008a:29) clearly states that the results of psychometric tests should be reviewed in conjunction with other forms of assessment to inform decision making on additional support needs. No child may be excluded from admission to a school on

the basis of standardised aptitude or psychometric tests alone.

The mainstream classes are quite large in number, with a ratio of one teacher to forty learners. Due to a lack of skilled teachers, there is no focus on learners with barriers to learning such as those with MID's, hence they do not receive the attention they need. My observation as a teacher is that these learners are unable to meet the academic expectations of the mainstream environment. As they are required to follow the same curriculum as the mainstream learners, they are not able to cope with their mainstream peers. During assessments, these learners with barriers to learning perform very poorly, due to poor literacy and mathematical skills, as well as the many socio-economic barriers with which they have to contend.

In addition, as there are no special schools in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth, learners with learning barriers from other neighbouring schools are currently placed at this mainstream school. This process continues without adequate intervention from the Education Department and District-based Support Teams. The learners with barriers to learning, including those with mild intellectual disabilities, are also required to write the Annual National Examination (ANA), with no guidance or support: they have to do this on their own. All of this has resulted in negative self-concepts, poor socialisation skills, and much stress and anxiety.

The referral of learners with MID's to the District Office of the Department of Education is also a challenge. In most cases, learners are placed on waiting lists for up to two and more years, without placement in special schools.

Several studies have been conducted in the area of learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools. However, these studies focused on different barriers to learning, such as reading, reading comprehension and writing, physical disabilities and so on. These studies were also located in different provinces in South Africa, which have different contexts. For instance, Landbrook (2009:5) investigated the challenges experienced by educators in the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in South Africa. The specific research looked at the extent to which educators were effective in implementing inclusive education

in primary schools and what was required from the Department of Education to equip educators (Landbrook, 2009:5). The study was therefore different from the current study, which focused on primary school teachers' experiences in providing learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools.

Another study focused on the identification of learning barriers affecting English reading comprehension instruction, as perceived by ESL undergraduates in Thailand (Chomchaiya and Dunworth, 2008), which found that students experienced difficulties in reading because they had not developed reading skills, such as using context clues or locating main ideas, and that they experienced problems in decoding words.

A study by Lundberg and Reichenberg (2013) titled *"Developing reading comprehension among students with mild intellectual disabilities: An intervention study"* demonstrated that students with MID's are capable of constructing meaning from written text through guided social instruction.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the discussion of the background and the rationale follows above, the research questions for this study can be formulated as follows:

1.3.1   Main Question

What are the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools?

1.3.2   Sub-questions

- In what ways do primary school teachers provide learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools?
- What challenges are experienced by primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools?

- How can the teachers' experiences be used to formulate guidelines that can be used to provide learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools?

1.3.3   Objectives of the study

- To explore and describe the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools.
- To ascertain ways in which primary school teachers provide learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools.
- To establish the challenges that are experienced by primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools.

- To use the primary schools teachers' experiences to formulate guidelines that could be used to provide learning support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools.

1.3.4   Significance of study

This study has the following potential significance:

- The study will present an opportunity for primary school teachers to express their views on their experiences of providing learning support for learners with MID's.
- The findings could be shared and used by other primary school teachers in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth.
- The findings could possibly influence the training of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth.

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

A description of some key concepts is provided, because they are important in this study.

1.4.1 Mild Intellectual Disabilities (MID's)

The concept 'mild intellectual disability' was used in this study to indicate that learning is delayed. Learners diagnosed with MID's absorb information at a much slower rate than those without the disability in the mainstream classes. They find abstract concepts, like money, time or social acceptability, more difficult to understand and reading, comprehension and writing more difficult to learn or acquire than their peers in mainstream education. These learners require lots of patience and support. The concept of MID's will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

1.4.2 Barriers to learning

Prinsloo, in Landsberg (2005:27), describes a barrier as an obstacle or circumstance that keeps people or things apart; it prevents communication and bars access to advancement. The author further lists the following as relevant issues that give rise to severe barriers in the provision of quality education for all children in South Africa: "The culture of poverty with its resultant under development, environmental deprivation, unplanned urbanisation, unemployment and negative expectations of the future; disintegration of family life, the effects of the decline of moral and value systems, the climate of violence and child abuse in contemporary South Africa, the HIV/Aids pandemic and its effect on the learning climate and language and cultural differences. This includes learners who are victims of various forms of abuse, street children, learners affected by HIV/AIDS or other diseases and many others. This results in a negative academic self-concept, an accumulated scholastic backlog and discomfort in the school situation."

Difficulties within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him-/herself also prevent access to the learning and development of learners

(DBE, 2010). Nel and Hugo (2013:14) explain that in the previous system, the focus was on the "specialness" of learners. Consequently, these learners were labeled as "special needs learners". Although many teachers still use this terminology, the NCSNET and NCESS report recommended that we move away from the concept of "special needs" and rather use the more descriptive and sensitive terminology "learners experiencing barriers to learning".

For the purpose of this study, the concept 'barriers to learning' implies any impediment or complication that may prevent learners with MID's from accessing educational provision and support.

1.4.3   Learner Support

The Department of Education defines learner support as any form of help, assistance and guidance given to learners who experience barriers to learning, to enable them to overcome these barriers. This support can be of a low intensive, moderate or high intensive level, depending on the needs of the learner (DoE, 2001:15).

The Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (DBE, 2009b) state that full-service or inclusive schools know how to differentiate the curriculum and ensure that learners receive individualised instruction and support. Instruction in inclusive schools should be characterised by, among other things, individualisation and multiple options for acquiring, storing and demonstrating learning (DBE, 2009b:24, 25, 27).

Vogel (2011:27) holds that parents could be a valuable source of information and support and should take part in the learning support of their child.

1.4.4   Learning Support

Learning support in principle assumes the collaboration of all role-players, the adaptation of the curriculum, peer support and also, where required, specialised

intervention and counseling. Enlisting collaboration for learning support depends on identifying and understanding those assets in the learner's environment that might be accessible (Landsberg, 2005:48).

The term "support" is used to describe both the learning support provided by teachers to individual learners in the classroom and the structures and arrangements beyond the classroom that make it possible for teachers to do this (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht, 2007:128).

Mavuso (2015:6) views the concept of learning support as a collaborative process that includes the identification of barriers to learning, the development of intervention programmes to support learners, the use of curriculum differentiation, and the appropriate referral and placement of learners with specific learning difficulties.

1.5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research problem addressed in this study is: What are the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities? The sub questions investigated have been formulated in Section 1.3.2.

The current research was approached from an interpretive research paradigm. Using an interpretive research paradigm assisted in obtaining the subjective experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's.

Research methodology refers to the coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the 'goodness of fit' to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2005:36).

The schools selected by purposeful sampling in this study refer to schools in the Northern Suburbs of the Port Elizabeth district. All educators at these respective schools were invited to participate in this study of which three educators per school

indicated their voluntary participation for interviews. The latter will be explained in further detail in Chapter 3.

The data collection methods in this study comprised, semi-structured individual interviews as well as documents and records. These research methods were regarded as the most appropriate in finding answers to the research question and sub-questions.

The research methodology for this study will be discussed further in Chapter 3, as well as ethical methods used in this study.

1.6   CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the study, including the aims of the study, problem statement and secondary research problem. The research problem is explained briefly, as well as a clarification of key concepts.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter aims to present the relevant literature on policies and practices regarding the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. The practices and processes of support for learners with MID's, as well as the teaching strategies, are discussed in depth.

Chapter Three: Design and Methodology

This chapter focuses on the research design, the methodology utilised, and the data collection procedures for the research study or investigation in order to find out what the experiences of primary school teachers are with regard to the provision of support for learners with MID's in primary mainstream schools.

Chapter Four: Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter deals with the different data collection strategies employed, an analysis of the data, and an interpretation thereof.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations for Further Studies

The findings of the investigation and recommendations for further studies to be undertaken, are discussed in this chapter. Finally, the limitations and conclusions stemming from this study are highlighted.

1.7   CONCLUSION

Chapter One provided an overview of the research, revealing the factors giving rise to the study, as well as clarifying the problem statement. The outcomes of the study, the research methodology used and the clarification of the key concepts used in the study were also sketched. Ethical aspects of research were also outlined in this chapter, followed by a summary of the chapter and concluding remarks.

Chapter Two will sketch a comprehensive overview of the study, shedding light on inclusive education and related policies, learning support and strategies to be used in the support of learners with MID's.

Chapter three will focus on the research design and research methods which will be used in this study. Trustworthiness and ethical aspects will be discussed and explained for the understanding of the reader.

Chapter four highlights the different data collection strategies employed, employment of the data analysis and the interpretation thereof.

Chapter five will present the recommendations and implications, possible suggestions for further studies as well as limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the focus will be on learning support for learners with MID's. The chapter will be divided into three parts, namely the contextualisation of learning support for learners with MID's; a discussion of intellectual disabilities with the emphasis on MID's; and learning support approaches for supporting learners with MID's.

In contextualisation, the chapter will address the relevant policies and the state of schooling internationally, in Africa and in South Africa, with reference to the types of schools and the placement of learners with MID's. In the South African context, there are three types of schools and this study is located in the mainstream school where many learners present with MID's.

As mentioned in Chapter One (Section 1.1), learners who require low-intensive support receive learning support in ordinary schools, while those who require moderate support receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools.

The chapter will look at the definition of the term intellectual disabilities, discussing types and causes. In addition, the chapter will look at policy guidelines for supporting learners with MID's.

In the final section, examples of learning support approaches towards learners with MID's will be examined.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is an integrated statement of principles that attempts to explain a phenomenon and make predictions (Woolfolk, 2007:14).

A theoretical framework explains or suggests a relationship between concepts or ideas. Sinclair (2007), as referenced in Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012:44-45), likens a theoretical framework to a map or travel plan. In the context of research, a theoretical framework refers to theories that are formulated to explain, predict and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under scrutiny exists (Swanson, 2013:1).

This study will make use of the Ecological Systems Theory, which was developed by Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner's theory signifies the family as an arrangement, within a number of other societal systems, and the effect of the family-school relationship as on a child's learning and development.

FIGURE 1.1: Model for Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory
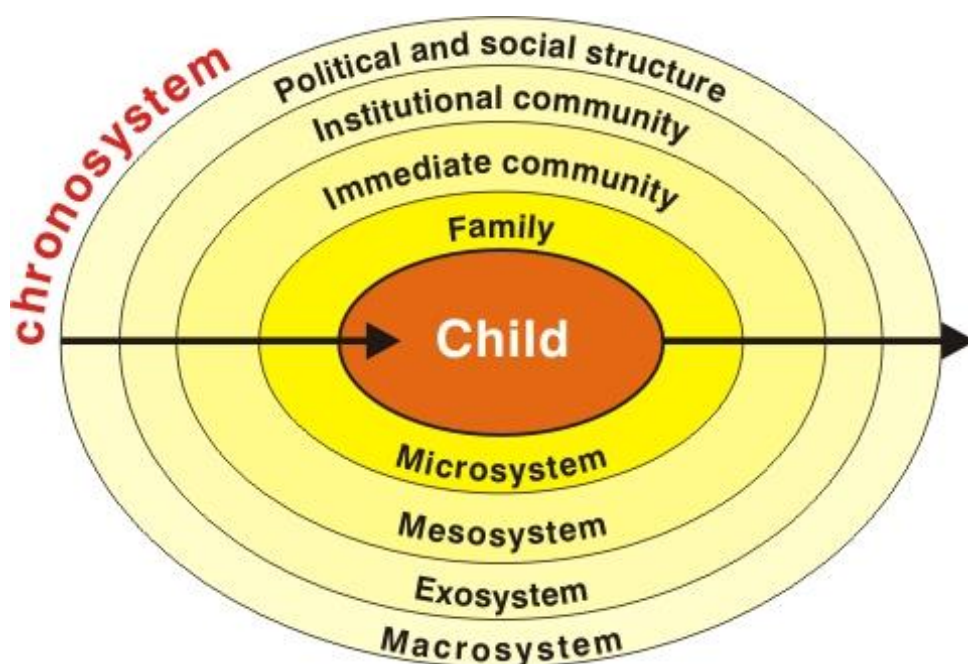
2.2.1   Discussion of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The Ecological Systems Theory, which was developed by Bronfenbrenner, is known as Bronfenbrenner's environmental system of development. The Theory identifies five environmental systems, which range from the fine-grained inputs of direct interactions with people to the broad-based inputs of culture (Santrock, 2006:51). This Theory is applicable to the study, in that it emphasises the relations between an individual's development and the systems within the general social context.

In the **microsystem** are the person's immediate relationships and activities. A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting, with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For a child, this might be the immediate family, or teachers and the activities of play and school. Relationships in the microsystem are reciprocal – they flow in both directions (Woolfolk, 2010:67).

The **mesosystem** is the set of interactions and relationships among all the elements of the microsystem – the family members interacting with each other, or with the teacher (Woolfolk, 2010:67). Bronfenbrenner (1986) contends that, although the family is the principal context in which human development takes place, it is but one of several settings in which developmental processes can and do occur.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) states that the **exosystem** comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings – at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives. The exosystem therefore refers to environments in which the learner is not directly involved, but that still influence the people who have proximal relationships with a person in his microsystems (Swart and Pettipher, 2011:13-15). Proximal interactions

are interactions that occur face to face and involve long-term relationships (for example, between learner and teacher and mother and child.) Person factors as well as social contexts affect proximal interactions (Donald *et al.*, 2010:40).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the **macrosystem** consists of the larger cultural world surrounding learners, together with any underlying belief systems, including government policies, political ideology, cultural customs and beliefs, historical events and the economic system. In other words, the macrosystem refers to attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies in the systems of a society and culture that may impact or be influenced by other systems. Values and beliefs could include democracy, social justice and *Ubuntu* (Swart and Pettipher, 2011:13-15).

A **chronosystem** encompasses change or consistency over time, not only in the characteristics of the person, but also in the environment in which that person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) For Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010), the chronosystem represents the changes that occur over a period of time in any given system (Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013:3). Lastly, the chronosystem looks at the developmental timeframes of the interactions between these systems and their influence on individual development (Swart and Pettipher, 2011:13-15).

Every child is raised amongst family, friends, teacher and peers and participates in social activities. These are the people they can relate to and who give guidance and support, where needed. This means that one should look at the ecosystem holistically, and not as a single unit. The whole process is interwoven; the one party is dependent on the other, because each one has an influence on the other.

In this study, the child's development and support structures were located within the mesosystem, in which the interactions of the child are shaped and enforced. In turn, the exosystem and macrosystem were considered to comprise socio-economic conditions, the school system, values and morals, and laws and traditions. From the Ecological Systems Theory, it is asserted that children's development and behaviour cannot be considered in isolation, but is rather shaped by the interactions in the mesosystem, which is then superceded by activities in the exo- and macrosystems.

Bronfenbrenner's framework, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), therefore allows an exploration of inclusive education that focuses on the development of systems and the development of individuals within these systems, identifying the interconnectedness within and between these systems. It therefore facilitates a better understanding of inclusive education (Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013:3).

Since inclusive education focuses on a systems approach, which means that systems in the society (e.g. classroom, school, family, community and government) need to interact with each other to provide a supportive structure for learners, it is important that teachers also familiarise themselves with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This Theory enables and helps teachers to understand the complex influences, interactions and interrelationships between learners and all the other systems that affect or pertain to them (Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2013:11).

2.3   CONTEXTUALISATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH MID's

This section will focus on the contextualisation of learning support for learners who experience barriers to learning, with special reference to intellectual disabilities. Historical perspectives on how these learners were accommodated and supported before the inception of inclusive education internationally, nationally and in South Africa, will also be addressed.

In the previous education system in South Africa, learners experiencing barriers to learning were often categorised based on their medical conditions, or the "problem-within-the-child". This gave rise to the so-called "medical model". Learners were diagnosed, treated and placed in a specialised environment, which resulted in labelling. In these specialised environments, a special curriculum was followed and these "special" learners received intervention by specialist staff and professional experts to "fix" them (Swart and Pettipher, 2011:5).

However, the medical model is not the accepted model any more, since it is seen as discriminatory. While medical information cannot be ignored when learners

experiencing barriers to learning are assessed and supported, it should not be the central focus when a support plan is designed (Nel, *et al.,* 2013:9; DBE, 2001:9-10).)

Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:3) assert that in order to understand aspects that influence the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools, Bronfenbrenner's eco-systemic framework, as discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.4, was adopted also in this study. This system focuses primarily on matters in society that have a direct influence on learners, such as family, classroom, school, community and political structures. This assists teachers in identifying, assessing and supporting learners who experience any barriers to learning in the classroom. In order to successfully implement these strategies in the classroom, teachers need to have the required knowledge and skills. The DBST, as discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.5.3, should be responsible for the necessary support for teachers in this regard.

2.3.1   International Influences

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:166-167) state that the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa cannot be divorced from the impact of international forces, articulated and supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989) and, according to Engelbrecht *et al.* (2007:29), imposing a series of duties that are owed to the child and/or the child's parents or guardians.

In addition to the right of the child to education, the covenant specifies that this should be on the basis of equal opportunity (Article 28(1)). This right is promoted further in the agreement that "the education of the child shall be directed to: (a) the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (Article 29 (1)).

2.3.2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1959, revised 1989)

As of 1 January 1992, this Convention had generated a formal commitment from over 107 countries and states, 35 of which were signatories to the Convention. This Convention imposes a series of duties that are owed to the child and/or the child's parents or guardians. In addition to the right of the child to education, the covenant specifies that this should be on the basis of equal opportunities (Article 28(1)). This right is promoted further in the agreement that the 'education of the child shall be directed do: (a) the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Article 29 (1); (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2007:29).

2.3.3 Dakar Framework for Action

The Dakar Framework recognises not only that education is a basic human right for all people in all countries, but also that education is a vital necessity in addressing serious global problems, such as poverty, illiteracy and even war. The new division of the Dakar Framework, therefore, "ensures that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality" (UNESCO, 2000:15). Another major goal of the Dakar Framework is "to create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning, which clearly defined levels of achievement for all" (UNESCO, 2000:20; Kanter, Damiami and Ferri, 2015:23).

2.3.4 Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (*SENDA*) introduces the right for disabled learners not to be discriminated against in education, training and any services provided wholly or mainly for learners, and for those enrolled on courses provided by 'responsible bodies', including further and higher education institutions and sixth form colleges. Learners' services covered by the Act can include a wide range of educational and non-educational services, such as field trips, examinations

and assessments, short courses, arrangements for work placements and libraries and learning resources (Anderson, 2015:1).

2.3.5   Warnock Report

The Warnock Report was ground breaking, for several reasons. It made several recommendations regarding how learners with barriers should be taught. The Report suggested that provision for barriers to learning should comprise the following: (a) distinct and specific ways in which the curriculum could be accessed (by specialist teaching, alternative resources or technology); (b) adaptations to the existing curriculum; and (c) making changes to the climate and ethos of the school in order to make it more open and accessible to those with barriers to learning (Garner, 2009:62).

2.3.6   Salamanca Statement (1994)

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action endorses the rights discourse, with a strong focus on the development of inclusive schools and states that "schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic, or other conditions" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 1994:6; Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013:1).

Kanter *et al*. (2015:22) elaborate by stating that unlike previous international documents, the Salamanca Statement focuses exclusively on special education and the promotion of inclusive education. The Salamanca Statement also provides detailed suggestions on how best to address the numerous levels of special education needs of students with disabilities. It also recognises the differing views on inclusive education among and within different countries of the world.

Furthermore, for the first time in an international document, the Salamanca Statement provides a definition of inclusive education, which is as follows:

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they might have. Inclusive schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of supports and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school (UNESCO, 1994:11-12; Kanter *et al.*, 2015:23).

2.3.7   Education for All (EFA)

The Education for All initiative, first put forth in 1990 by the international community, marked a global movement towards providing quality basic education to all children, youth and adults (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 1994); Donohue and Bornman, 2014:1). To accomplish this initiative, six specific goals were proposed, namely the provision and expansion of early childhood education, provision of learning and life-skills programmes for adults; the improvement of the adult literacy rate by fifty per cent by the year 2015; the elimination of gender inequality in education; and the improvement of all aspects of education in order to provide quality education for all. In 2000, 189 countries renewed their commitment towards reaching these educational ideals through their adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (UNESCO, 2000), of which South Africa is a signatory (Donohue and Bornman, 2014:1).

2.3.8   International Countries

The unavailability of support for teachers in an inclusive setting is not a South African problem only; internationally, countries are also experiencing difficulties in making sure that learners and teachers are supported in inclusive settings (Mahlo, 2011:58).

Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009:103) have summarised the road to inclusive education for some countries, mentioning that Korea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia and Thailand were among the first Asian countries to introduce individual

learning programmes to support children with Special Educational Needs (Barriers to learning),

In China, classes, mainly for underperforming learners, affiliated to ordinary schools, were began alongside the first in-service-teacher training programmes to provide support for children with mild learning difficulties. The United States of America can be considered as one of the more progressive countries, having actively promoted the full inclusion of children with barriers to learning (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009:103).

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook (2008:15), as referenced in Mahlo (2011:59), most countries have ensured that relevant provision is made to support both learners and teachers in inclusive education. 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 the unwillingness of mainstream teachers to accept responsibility for special needs students (Mahlo, 2011:59).

In Ghana in Africa, prior to the 1990s, very few students with disabilities were included in regular education classrooms. However, the needs of many children with disabilities were not being met: the Government launched two programmes to reform the system of educational provision for such students. However, the implementation of public policy with respect to persons with disabilities in Ghana has been riddled with problems. These findings raise concerns regarding the implementation of the Inclusive Education Programme in Ghana and government policies as guidelines (Alhassan, 2014:116).

Dube (2012:32, 37, 48) highlights the state of inclusion in the following African countries:

Malawi: In 2001, the government of Malawi developed its Education Policy Investment Framework, which took forward its commitment to the creation of quality

education for all children, including children with disabilities. The Policy is aimed at developing and managing an inclusive primary education system and increasing the number of children with disabilities who graduate from primary school; training more specialist teachers to support learners with special needs at primary schools as well as including a module on Special Needs Education (SNE) in the curriculum for secondary school teachers.

Namibia: The government's Sector Policy on Inclusive Education: Implementation and Supporting Guidelines, developed in 2004, aims to ensure that all learners are educated in the least restrictive educational setting and in schools in their neighbourhood to the fullest extent possible. The specific objectives of the Policy are to expand access to and support learners with a wide range of individual abilities and special needs in compulsory as well as in pre-, primary and secondary education.

Swaziland: In April 2011, the government of Swaziland released the Education and Training Sector Policy (EDSEC). The EDSEC informs the country's approach to education for children with disabilities. The Framework argues strongly for a 'mainstreaming' approach that recognises that "a number of important cross-cutting issues must be effectively integrated, or mainstreamed, into the body of this EDSEC Policy to ensure they are comprehensively addressed, monitored and reported".

Lesotho: According to Engelbrecht and Green (2007:26), education in Lesotho is viewed as the right of every child. More specifically, with regard to learners with disability, the Act indicates that the government will strive to ensure, as soon as circumstances permit, that a learner who is physically, mentally or otherwise handicapped, is given the special treatment, education and care required by his or her condition.

2.3.9 Transforming the process of education in South Africa

Apart from the global movement towards inclusive education, South Africa had its own specific reasons to change its education system to inclusivity. In the previous apartheid system, segregation in education, based on race and disability, was the

order of the day (DoE, 2001; Nel *et al*., 2013:6). Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:2) emphasise that during the apartheid era in South Africa, learners were not only educated separately according to race, but a separate education system existed for learners with disabilities or impairments.

South African education entered a new era in 1994, when democracy was declared. With this emerged a new Constitution (1996) and a Bill of Rights, outlining the right to access quality education, shifting previous discourses to welcome a rights discourse (Pillay and Di Terlizzi, 2009:491). This meant a change from the medical discourse, which considered the learner from a deficit perspective, to the rights discourse, in terms of which the learner's right to learn, is paramount. Emphasis on important values, such as equity, non-discrimination, liberty, respect and social justice, which have provided the framework for the Constitution, has been associated with this socio-economic shift (Landsberg, 2005:16).

Policy documents and legislation that emerged to reflect the abovementioned values will be discussed below.

2.3.9.1   *South African Constitution of 1996*

The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) contains the Bill of Rights, which emphasises the importance of democracy. Human rights and social justice for all learners are emphasised, as well as the optimum participation and social integration of all learners (Nel, Lazarus and Daniels, 2010:S21). This document has had a significant impact on educational policies and the implementation thereof. Through the South African Constitution, the state recognises the basic human right to education; a single, inclusive educational system for all learners; and that all learners must have access to the curriculum, enabling them to participate in the learning process; and finally, that children have a basic right to family and parental care (DoE, 1997:25; Nel *et al*., 2010:S21; Landsberg, 2005:62, as referenced in Van Niekerk, 2013:78).

2.3.9.2   *White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy for South Africa (Department of Education, 1997)*

The *White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS)* emphasises the need to develop a holistic educational model, based on the principle of human rights. It promotes the recognition and acceptance of people with disabilities as equal members of their communities. Furthermore, it argues that people with disabilities are as entitled to all facets and benefits of society as are the rest of society (DoE, 1997:46). Therefore, it was suggested that it might not be in the best interest of communities to separate those with disabilities (Engelbrecht and Green, 2007:3).

This document proposes equity for all learners with disabilities. It implies the availability of learner support structures within an inclusive learning environment. To accomplish this, change needs to occur in many spheres of service delivery. A multi–disciplinary team approach needs to be accepted. Various stakeholders, including education, health, parents and other professionals, need to embrace their responsibility towards people with disabilities (Bornman *et al.*, 2010:25, as referenced in Van Niekerk, 2013:79-80).

2.3.9.3   *South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996)*

Section 5 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) states that public schools must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way. In determining the placement of a learner with special education needs, the relevant Head of Department and Principal must also consider the rights and wishes of the parents, and of the learner him-/herself, uphold the principle of 'the best interest of the child' in any decision-making. Section 5 also sets out how the State must provide for the educational needs of disabled persons (DoE, 1996).

2.3.9.4 *National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training (NCSNET and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS)*

Together with SASA, the NCSNET and NCESS Report in 1997 played a major role in placing education practices on a more inclusive footing. The NCSNET and the NCESS were commissions appointed by the late Professor Kader Asmal to investigate the provision of education for learners with special needs in South Africa.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:171) state that the Report's emphasis is on the responsiveness of the education system to diversity and the integration of the two systems of education that had been historically separated, namely special and regular schools.

After this Report, as mentioned by Nel *et al.* (2013:7), EWP6 was accepted in 2001 as the legal policy to build an inclusive education and training system. Nel *et al.* further mentions that both the NCSNET and NCESS report and the EWP6 were grounded in the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), which guarantees human rights, and the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a).

2.3.9.5 *Education White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System – July 2001*

The EWP6 was introduced in July 2001. This EWP6 is seen as one of the most influential policies developed by the Department of Education in recent years.

The EWP6 provides the framework for the implementation of inclusive education in all public schools. It aims to address the diverse needs of all learners in one undivided education system. Based on the rights discourse, the EWP6 strives to steer away from the categorisation and separation of learners according to disability, aiming to facilitate their maximum participation in the education system (Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013:2).

In 2007, South Africa signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and, in 2008, was amongst the first 21 countries to ratify the Convention. Article 24 of this Convention states that:

"persons with disabilities should be guaranteed the right to inclusive education at all levels, regardless of age, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity" (DBE, 2010:8).

The main focus of these mentioned documents was the integration of special and ordinary education through building alterations, curriculum development and modifications, staff training and inters- sectorial collaboration (Walton, 2006:45).

2.3.9.6   *The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*

According to Coetzee (2012:1), the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is not a new curriculum, but an amendment to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Grades R-12), so that the curriculum would become more accessible to teachers. Every subject in each grade will have a single, comprehensive and concise Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which will provide details on what content teachers ought to teach and assess on a grade-by-grade and subject-by-subject basis. There will be clearly delineated topics for each subject and a recommendation on the number and type of assessments per term. Outcomes and assessment standards are now called topics and themes, while learning areas are now called subjects (Coetzee, 2012:1).

For Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:4), the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement provides guidelines to schools in terms of curriculum content and assessment requirements. However, the CAPS is structured in such a way that it does not support the requirements of the EWP6, which promotes curriculum and assessment differentiation.

2.3.9.7 *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)*

When Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System was approved, the Department of Education had to design a plan to implement this paper. One component of the implementation of Inclusive Education is the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), released in 2008. SIAS aims to respond to the diverse needs of all learners within the schooling system and to facilitate school access for children who were marginalised or totally excluded (DBE, 2008a; Bornman and Rose, 2010:37).

The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support introduces new roles and responsibilities for the various stakeholders involved in the scholastic career of the child. It acknowledges the central role played by educators, parents, Special Schools as Resource Centres, Full Service Schools, communities, District Based Support Teams and Institutional Level Support Teams (DBE, 2008a).

Inclusive education must be structured and function in such a manner that it accommodates learner diversity and needs. Therefore, inclusion entails more than just educators and learners working together at school (Bornman and Rose, 2010:9). The theoretical framework of this study, which is Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory, indicates that learners are linked to different organisms and their environment; therefore, all stakeholders have a responsibility towards all learners, especially those experiencing scholastic challenges (Van Niekerk, 2013:86).

2.4 INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

According to the DSM-5: Diagnostic Criteria for Intellectual Disability, an intellectual disability is described as a disorder, with onset during a child's developmental period, which includes both intellectual and adaptive functioning deficits in conceptual, social and practical domains (DSM-5, page xii). DSM-5 is also a tool for

collecting public health statistics on mental disorder morbidity and mortality rates (DSM-5, page xii).

Defining a phenomenon such as intellectual impairment has interested many academics and researchers from different disciplines for many years. Their attempts have not always been successful and could even have created some confusion, because educationists tend to define the phenomenon differently from the way physicians, psychologists, sociologists or legal professionals do (Jooste and Jooste in Landsberg, 2005:381). Brady and Woolfson (2008:221) state that the United Kingdom (UK) uses the term 'learning difficulties' to describe students with intellectual or learning difficulties. Furthermore, Brady and Woolfson (2008:221) explain that intellectual or learning disabilities include all learners' special educational needs, including physical, sensory, and emotional-behavioural.

2.4.1   Categories of Intellectual Disabilities

Usually, there are four different categories of intellectual impairment, namely mild, moderate, severe and profound, depending on the level of the impairment. Below-average intellectual functioning, which coexists with deficits in adaptive behaviour (adjustment to everyday life) during the developmental period, adversely affects a child's educational performance. Intellectual disability is not a disease or illness (DBE, 2010:74).

For the purpose of this study, the following types of intellectual disabilities are discussed below:

2.4.1.1   *Mild Mental Retardation (Mild Intellectual Disability)*

Lewis and Doorlag (2006:236) state that at age 6, learners with MID's may act like 4-year olds; at age 10, their school achievement may resemble that of second or third graders. Donald *et al.* (2010:314) observed that MID's affect the largest group (approximately 4.5 per cent) in the range of children who may be considered as

experiencing intellectual disability. Most students with this level of disability can have their needs addressed in a regular classroom.

Conventionally, children in this group have IQs in the range of approximately 55/60-70/75 (with other factors being taken into account). Although there is considerable variation between the upper and lower levels, children in this group are generally able to learn the basic scholastic skills expected of primary school children – but at a much slower rate than other children. Although there is a limit to what they can achieve scholastically, they, can, with the right educational help, be reasonably self-supporting by adulthood (Donald *et al.* 2010:316).

2.4.1.2   Moderate Mental Retardation (Moderate Intellectual Disability)

Donald *et al.* (2010:316) maintain that although a few of those with this level of intellectual disability may benefit from scholastic education, most require a significantly adapted curriculum. On the whole, they are unable to learn basic social and self-help skills (e.g. social communication, dressing, and using public transport), as well as some routine occupational skills. However, most find conventional scholastic skills beyond their ability.

2.4.1.3   *Severe Mental Retardation (Severe or Profound Intellectual Disability)*

Learners in this group have IQs below 30/35. This is a very small group, of whom none can cope in mainstream education. These learners may learn some self- help skills. Many require total, full-time physical care (feeding, toileting and dressing) and will continue to need this into adulthood (Donald *et al.*, 2010:317).

Westwood (2007:19) mentions that many individuals with severe intellectual disability also have additional difficulties (physical, sensory, emotional, and behavioural) and are frequently described as having 'high support needs".

2.4.1.4   *Profound Mental Retardation*

Woolfolk (2010:140) agrees that an IQ score below the 70 range is not enough to diagnose a child as having intellectual disabilities; there must also be problems with adaptive behaviour, day-to-day independent living, and social functioning. This caution is especially important when interpreting the scores of students from different cultures.

TABLE 2.1: Classification of Intellectual Disability, stratified by three age groups

Age 0-5 years **Maturation and Development**	Age 6-20 years **Training and Education**	**21 years and older** **Social and Vocational Adequacy**
Degree: Mild Generally develop communicative and social skills. May not be distinguishable until beginning school.	Can learn up to 4th/5th primary school grade skills when reaching the ages of 18 or 19 years. Can be integrated into society.	Is capable of acquiring social and work skills for integration into the workforce at minimum wage.
Degree: Moderate Can speak or learn to communicate. Some difficulties with motor skills.	Difficulty meeting 2nd primary school grade academic objectives.	May be able to partially maintain him-/herself economically in manual work under protected conditions
Degree: Severe Marked limitations in motor skills. Minimal language ability.	Can speak or learn to communicate. Can learn elemental self-care and health habits.	Can partially contribute to maintaining him-/herself economically under total supervision.
Degree: Profound Significant delay, minimal functional ability in sensorimotor areas. Needs basic care.		Some motor and language development. Can learn very limited care skills.

Adapted from: Katz and Lazcano-Ponce (2008:135)

2.4.2 Causes of Intellectual Disabilities

According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2002:131-141), the causative factors of intellectual impairment can be rather complex. The Department of Education mentions the following categories: (i) extrinsic factors within the centre of learning (school), the education system or the broader social, economic and political context, and/or psychological factors (Jooste and Jooste in Landsberg, 2005:382).

Different learning needs may also arise because of negative attitudes to and stereotyping of difference; an inflexible curriculum; inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching; inappropriate curriculum; inaccessible and unsafe built environment; inappropriate and inadequate support services; inadequate policies and legislation; the non-recognition and non-involvement of parents; and inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators (DoE, 2001). For the purpose of this study, MID will now be discussed.

2.5   MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (MID)

Individuals with intellectual disabilities comprise a very heterogeneous group, including some very low-functioning individuals who require almost complete and continuous care and management, through to others (the majority) with only mild difficulties, often not detected until they are required to learn in school (Westwood, 2007:18).

Learners with MID's are often blamed for being 'lazy' or disobedient when the problem is not recognised. This is damaging to the student concerned, but can be corrected through identifying the problem for what it is (Donald *et al.*, 2010:314).

Woolfolk (2010:140) holds that an intelligence quotient (IQ) score below the 70 range is not enough to diagnose a child as having intellectual disabilities. There must also be problems with adaptive behaviour, day-to-day independent living, and social functioning.

On the other hand, Raymond (2012:30) holds that the majority of learners with disabilities have milder forms of disabilities. Often the disabilities go undetected, leaving the student to struggle on their own. In addition, the learners are often blamed for their lack of achievement or their problem behaviour.

2.5.1 Characteristics of learners with MID's in terms of the following:

Rosenberg, Westling and McLesley (2008:208) claim that learners with MID's vary widely in their ability to do school work and adjust to social situations in school and other locations. However, in contrast to most other disability categories, learners with MID's tend to have more general, delayed development in academic, social and adaptive skills. Heward (2014:1) observes that many children with MID's are not identified until they enter school and sometimes not until the second or third grade, when more difficult academic work is required.

In their review, Gresham and MacMillan (2014:1) explain that learners with MID's generally have poor social skills, exhibit more interfering problem behaviours, and are poorly accepted or rejected by peers. Heward (2014:3) echoes that the making and sustaining of friendships and personal relationships present significant challenges for many persons with intellectual disabilities. Their limited cognitive processing skills, poor language development and unusual or inappropriate behaviours can seriously impede interacting with others.

Cognitive and Learning Characteristics

According to Tiekstra, Hessels and Minnaert (2009:804), learners with intellectual disabilities often lack the cognitive processes that are needed to solve tasks that are generally used in intelligence tests. Rosenberg *et al.* (2008:208) confirm that learners with MID's are characterised by general delays in cognitive development that influence the acquisition of language and academic skills. Moreover, while these learners can learn much information that is part of the general education curriculum, they learn at a slower pace than typical learners. Three of the most cognitive deficits

exhibited by learners with MID's are related to attention, memory and generalisation (Rosenberg *et al.*, 2008:208).

Learners with an intellectual impairment tend to demonstrate a limited capacity for focused attention and concentration. This decreases the effectiveness of working memory (short-term memory) and implies that these learners find it difficult to keep information active in working memory while comparing it with new sensory information or with existing information stored in long-term memory (Jooste and Jooste in Landsberg, 2005:393; Rosenberg *et al.*, 2008:209; Heward, 2014:1).

Academic characteristics

Heward (2014:2) is of the opinion that learners with disabilities often have trouble using their newly acquired knowledge and skills in settings or situations that differ from the context in which they first learned those skills. Such transfer or generalisation of learning occurs without explicit programming for many learners without disabilities, but may not be evident in learners with intellectual disabilities, without specific programming to facilitate it.

For Rosenberg *et al.* (2008:208), learners who are identified with MID's lag significantly behind grade-level peers in developing academic skills. Therefore, these students are likely to be significantly delayed in learning to read and acquiring basic math skills. This delay in developing foundational skills in reading and math, coupled with delays in developing language skills, results in delays in other academic areas that require the use of these skills (such as writing, spelling, science) (Rosenberg *et al.*, 2008:208).

Reading: The ability to read and comprehend text is a necessary prerequisite for full participation in modern society. Moreover, people with intellectual disabilities should have the human right to be active citizens in a tolerant and open society (Lundberg and Reichenberg, 2013:2). Allor, Champlin, Gifford and Mathes (2010:500) contend that reading is a skill beyond the intellectual capabilities of most learners with intellectual disabilities; at best, they might be taught to recognise a limited number of

sight words (i.e. high frequency words). As such, four in five children with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities never achieve even minimal levels of literacy.

Writing: The handwriting of learners with barriers to learning is mostly untidy, the line formation and size of the letters are uneven, and their writing speed is very slow or fast. Slow writers tend to press extremely hard with their pencil or pen while writing. Furthermore, some learners' handwriting gives the impression of neatness, but it is extremely difficult to read (Dednam in Landsberg, 2005:137).

2.5.2 Mild Intellectual Disabilities and Effect on Learning

During the school years, the main goal is to teach children with intellectual disabilities basic educational skills, such as reading and mathematics, as well as vocational skills (Santrock, 2006:180).

Westwood (2007:18) states that learners with MID's tend to be indistinguishable in many ways from children traditionally described as "slow learners". He further suggests that in assisting these learners in mainstream education, teachers will usually need to make modifications to the learning activities and the content of the curriculum.

Learners with intellectual disabilities often lack the cognitive processes that are needed to solve tasks that are generally used in intelligence tests. Furthermore, learners with intellectual disabilities generally do not explore all the information available; encoding and storage of the information is often very passive and superficial; and they show deficiencies in selective attention (Tiekstra *et al.,* 2009:804).

Donald *et al.* (2010:262) mention that most children with MID's are either in mainstream education (with their difficulties unrecognised) or have dropped out through repeated failure and lack of help. Some are in learning support classes where these are available. Donald *et al.* (2010:262) further suggest that it is important to establish whether a child's difficulty is intellectual or something else. A

full psychological assessment is desirable, but may not always be viable. In particular, observe whether the pattern of slow learning is general and consistent.

2.5.3   Support in mainstream schools for learners with MID's

As stated in the EWP6, before the inclusive process, teachers often expressed their concerns regarding the placement of learners with intellectual disabilities in mainstream classrooms. In the EWP6 (DoE, 2001:3), it is further stated that the reluctance to provide support for learners with MID's could be attributed to the fact that many teachers have not been trained in teaching learners with intellectual disabilities and do not have the required skills and knowledge to do so (DoE, 2001:3).

Jooste and Jooste in Landsberg (2005:388) state that teachers have to be part of different teams in order to effectively support learners with an intellectual impairment. The effective functioning of support teams, such as class support teams, school-based support teams and District-based support teams requires special skills.

The school-based support team should respond to teachers' requests for assistance with support plans for learners experiencing barriers to learning; review teacher-development support plans; gather any additional information required; and provide direction and support in respect of additional strategies, programmes, services and resources to strengthen the individual support plan (ISP) (DBE, 2014).

These skills include the ability to share information objectively and openly in the interests of learners experiencing barriers to learning; effective communication; the ability to substantiate one's ideas; respect for different opinions; the ability to look holistically at learners or learning; and a more flexible definition on one's role as a teacher (Landsberg, 2005:388).

Lewis and Doorlag (2006:236) are of the opinion that learners with MID's have special needs in academic, classroom behavioural, physical and social performance and may require individualised assistance form special educators in several of these

areas. They further mention two main indicators of mild mental retardation: firstly, although such students are able to learn, their rate of learning is slow. Due to this, their level of development resembles that of younger children. The second indicator is that most areas of development are delayed. Unlike students with learning disabilities, individuals with MID's perform poorly on most tasks, compared to their peers. Their disability is comprehensive; it impinges on performance at school, at home, in the neighbourhood and in the community. These students fail to meet age expectations in intellectual and language development, academic achievement, social competence and prevocational skills (Lewis and Doorlag, 2006:236).

It is clearly stated in Engelbrecht *et al.* (2007:129) that teachers in inclusive classrooms cannot accommodate all learners effectively without support. The term 'support' is used to describe both the learning support provided by teachers to individual learners in the classroom and the structures and arrangements beyond the classroom that make it possible for teachers to do this.

However, as stated by Westwood (2007:17), the trend toward inclusion has made it essential now for all teachers to possess a working knowledge of the effects disabilities can have on students' development, learning and social adjustment. Teachers also need to develop strategies for helping these learners participate in the mainstream curriculum.

2.6   ADDRESSING INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN SCHOOLS: POLICY PERSPECTIVES

The South African Department of Education's policy on inclusive education (DoE, 2001) highlights two major approaches to addressing barriers to learning:

Prevention: The preventative approach in education focuses on transforming educational institutions and curricula to facilitate access to appropriate education for all students. It also focuses on elements of social transformation that can help to prevent the occurrence of barriers to learning.

Support: The supportive approach focuses on providing education support services to schools, staff, parents/caregivers, and students. Although support for students with specific learning and developmental needs is required on individual level, there are also many problems at other levels of the education system and in the learning environment. Transformation at these levels also needs to be facilitated if optimal outcomes are to be achieved (Donald *et al.*, 2010:23).

2.6.1   Education White Paper 6 (EWP6)

The EWP6 recognises that:

"the success of the approach to addressing barriers to learning and the provision of the full range of diverse learning needs lies with our education managers and educator cadre. Accordingly, and in collaboration with our provincial departments of education, the Ministry shall, though the district support teams provide access for educators to appropriate pre-service and in-service education and training and professional support services" (DoE, 2001:6).

The EWP6 (DoE, 2001) formally introduces the concept of inclusive education (IE) and provides the framework for the implementation of an IE system in South Africa. It clearly indicates the requirements for IE, with specific reference to the roles and responsibilities of role players at the different levels of education. The EWP6 also emphasises the need to adapt school programmes to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners. However, most participating educators struggle to comprehend the relevance of the EWP6 in the context of the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) that they are expected to implement in schools (DoE, 2001; Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013:1).

Education White Paper 6 contains evidence of legislation giving flesh to the principles of inclusion in South Africa (Bornman and Rose, 2010:25). A number of documents and studies have reported that the Education White Paper 6 aims to create a systemic education system in South Africa in line with international trends, where transformational change in education is evident (DoE, 1997:43; Engelbrecht,

2006:253). Moreover, this policy document paves the way for all learners to participate actively in educational activities, reach their full potential and become equal, active members of society (DoE, 1997:43; DoE, 2001:5-7; Van Niekerk, 2013:84).

Inclusive education in South Africa embraces the values of equality and human rights; therefore, the unfair, unjust education system prior to 1994 has been replaced by a system that provides equal opportunities to all (DoE, 2002:4; Engelbrecht, 2006:253). The Department of Education changed its education policies to ensure that the democratic and inclusive vision, values and principles that inform education are recognised (DoE, 1997:43; DoE, 2002:4).

Four key areas are identified in Education White Paper 6: all learners should become part of a lifelong learning process; inequalities exist and there is a need to redress these inequalities; all learners must have equal educational opportunities; and education must be of a good quality (DoE, 2001:43, Van Niekerk, 2013:84).

The EWP defines inclusive education as acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support. It also emphasises the following: enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of learners; acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language class, disability, HIV and other infectious diseases; acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community and within formal and informal settings and structures; changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners; and maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions; and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning (DoE, 2001:6-7, Pasensie, 2012:2).

2.6.2   Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)

The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DBE, 2008a) document was released by the National Department of Education in

2008. This manual forms part of the implementation of Education White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education: Building and Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001:1). A key principle of the policy is to move away from organising support on the basis solely of the category of disability. The SIAS Strategy provides teachers, parents and schools with the tools to determine these needs, in terms of the barriers posed by the disability or intrinsic needs of the learner, as well as the context in which he/she learns and lives (DBE, 2008a:4).

This approach to assessment moves away from assessing the intrinsic barriers to learning within the learner, and enables a thorough investigation into the extrinsic, contextual factors contributing to the barriers to learning (Daniels, 2010:637).

The above statement complements the eco-systemic theory of Bronfenbrenner as discussed in Chapter One Section 4.1, which indicates that all systems (family, school and community) and the inter-relationships between them are important influences in children's lives. The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) is one of the core functions of the District-based Support Team. The District senior manager authorises the final approval of decisions (Nel *et al.*, 2013:57).

The primary focus of the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) as support framework will be to facilitate school access for all learners, especially those experiencing barriers to learning (Bornman and Rose, 2010:37; DBE, 2014).

2.6.3 Guidelines for inclusive teaching and learning (DoE, 2010)

The guidelines to inclusive learning and teaching are a sequel to the strategy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), which has been developed to enable teachers to identify learner needs (DBE, 2010:19).

This document, in collaboration with other documents as mentioned before, proposes that classrooms should be accessible to all kinds of learners. It provides

additional information for educators on conditions, illnesses, disabilities and deprivations that impact on children's ability to learn effectively. It outlines characteristics, the barriers they present, and strategies for effective teaching (DBE, 2010:9).

Most understandings of disability relate to individual deficits. As a result, disability has always been regarded as a learning barrier. The most common barriers include visual loss, hearing loss, speech and language difficulties, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, psychological disorders and neurological disorders (DBE, 2010:13).

Learners may have chronic illnesses or conditions that affect the quality of their lives. Such conditions have the potential to cause learning and development barriers. Educators should be aware of these conditions and be able to take appropriate steps to ensure the well-being of the learner while at school (DBE, 2010:95).

Deprivations that impact on children's ability to learn effectively include lack of parental recognition and involvement, socio-economic barriers (e.g. poor reading and print background, a poor self-image, changes in the family structure, and family dynamics), and negative attitudes. Discriminatory attitudes resulting from prejudice against people on the basis of race, class, gender, culture, disability, religion, ability, sexual preference and/or other characteristics manifest themselves as barriers to learning when such attitudes are directed towards learners in the education system (DBE, 2010:17).

Furthermore, these Guidelines seek to prevent the common misconception that barriers exist only within the learner, and that barriers to learning are best taken care of during the practical session of a lesson by giving learners with barriers to learning less demanding tasks (DBE, 2010:9).

2.6.4   Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

According to the Department of Basic Education, CAPS is not a new curriculum, but an amendment to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). It therefore still follows the same process and procedure as the NCS Grades R–12 (2002) (Pinnock, 2011, as referenced in Du Plessis, 2013:1).

The CAPS is an adjustment to *what* we teach (curriculum) and not *how* we teach (teaching methods). There is much debate and discussion about Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) being removed; however, OBE is a method of teaching, not a curriculum. It is the curriculum that has changed (repackaged), and not the teaching method. The way the curriculum is written now, is in content format, rather than outcomes format. This means that it is more conclusive to traditional teacher methods, rather than OBE methods. There is one single comprehensive National Curriculum and Assessment Policy for each subject (Maskew Miller Longman, 2012:8, Du Plessis, 2013:1).

According to CAPS (DBE, 2011), inclusivity should be a central part of organisation, planning and teaching at all schools. This will be possible only if teachers demonstrate a positive attitude towards inclusive education, become familiar with learning barriers and address barriers to learning. Inclusive education can happen at all schools when barriers are identified and addressed by all the relevant support structures, such as the ILST or the use of the SIAS process within the school community, including the class educator, school management team (SMT), ILST, DBST, SGBs and parents (DBE, 2011:3).

2.7   LEARNING SUPPORT

The Department of Education (2001:15) defines learning support as any form of help, assistance and guidance given to learners who experience barriers to learning, to enable them to overcome their barriers. This support can be of a low intensity or of a moderate or high intensity, depending on the needs of the individual learner.

Landsberg (2005:48) contends that learning support in principle assumes the collaboration of all role-players (i.e. including family and community members), the adaptation of the curriculum, peer support and also, where required, specialised intervention and counselling. The learner's progress is assessed holistically and understood bio-ecologically.

In an inclusive classroom, all learners are important, but those who experience barriers to their learning and development make special demands on teachers, who have to find ways of meeting their special educational needs. Teachers address these needs by providing learning support. In other words, *they make it easier for learning to happen.* Learning support is generally most effective if it combines action at a range of levels (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2007:129).

Support is not only about the educator in the classroom helping the learner to cope with education demands or the parent at home assisting the learner; it also includes support provided by non-educators, School Governing Bodies (SGBs), caregivers, guardians, families, peers and other professionals within the community (DoE, 2009b:21).

For the purpose of this study, these support structures will now be discussed.

2.7.1   Classroom support

Vogel (2011:5) mentions that classroom management is what a teacher does to make the classroom pleasant, meaningful, safe and orderly for learners. Managing the classroom entails performing those managerial actions that will ensure that learning support can take place effectively and efficiently and that learners will feel comfortable and non-threatened.

2.7.2   Institutional Level Support Team (ILST)

The primary function of this team is to put in place properly co-ordinated learner and educator support services. These services support the learning and teaching

process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and school-based needs (DoE, 2001).

This team is composed of teachers in the school who act as the core support team and, where appropriate, also parents and learners. This team functions as a permanent structure in the school setting, but involves different teachers, parents and learners on an on-going basis, based on the needs of the teachers, parents and learners themselves and the roles they have to play in the process of providing support to learners (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2007:160).

If there is no SBST at a school, the DBST must assist in setting it up. SBSTs need to support teachers and caregivers in this process by providing opportunities for regular, collaborative problem-solving in areas of concern, and facilitating the provision of support, where needed (DBE, 2014).

2.7.3 District-based Support Team (DBST)

The District-based Support Team (DBST) is a management structure at District level that carries the responsibility to coordinate and promote inclusive education through training; curriculum delivery; the distribution of resources; infrastructure development; and the identification and assessment of and addressing barriers to learning. The DBST must provide leadership and general management to ensure that the schools within the District are inclusive centres of learning, care and support. Leadership for the structure must be provided by the District Senior Management that could designate transversal teams to provide support (DBE, 2014:viii).

According to SIAS (DBE, 2014), the DBST forms a key component in the successful implementation of an inclusive education support system. This policy gives an overview of the roles and responsibilities of DBSTs with regard to the management of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support process as a measure to establish such support teams (DBE, 2014:35).

The policy is for all support staff in the DBST, including curriculum and school managers, human resource planning and development coordinators, social workers, therapists, psychologists and other health professionals, working within the school system (DBE, 2014:35).

2.7.4 Curriculum Development and Support (CDS)

District Support Teams and Institutional-level Support Teams (also known as School-based support teams) will be required to provide curriculum, assessment and instructional support in the form of illustrating learning programmes, learner support materials and equipment, assessment instruments and professional support for educators at special schools/resource centres and full-service and other educational institutions (DoE, 2001).

The following section will examine the different teaching strategies to be used by teachers for learners with MID's.

2.8 TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LEARNERS WITH MID's IN MAINSTREAM CLASS

In this section, some teaching strategies for learners with intellectual disabilities will be examined, which include accommodations and adaptations for learners with MID's, peer tutoring, differentiation, promoting active learning, and scaffolding.

In a classroom with a diversity of learning needs, one cannot employ only one or two different teaching methods addressing a limited number of learning styles. Teaching methods need to vary so that all learners' learning styles can be included and a diversity of learning needs can be addressed (Nel *et al.*, 2013:59).

Lerner and Kline (2006:39) suggest that the strategies below will assist learners with learning disabilities in the mainstream class:

The teacher should begin each lesson with a review of what has already been learned. The learners should be informed about the goal of the lesson. The placement of the learners is critical: learners who need assistance should be placed near to the teacher that they can receive positive support.

In addition, all students should be taught study skills, and sufficient practice and adequate opportunities should be allowed to practice such concepts or skills. Teachers should collaborate with learning support teachers. Differentiated instruction should be used, taking into account the learners' learning styles and needs. At the end of each lesson, a summary of what has been learned should be provided (Lerner and Kline, 2006:39).

For the purpose of this study, different teaching strategies will be highlighted below.

2.8.1   Accommodations and Adaptations

Lerner and Kline (2006:111) hold that most learners with MID's (83%) spend at least a portion of their school day in mainstream classrooms. This means that the accommodation of these learners in the mainstream class include the improvement of organisational skills, increased learner attention, and improve their ability to listen, curriculum adaptation, and time management (Lerner and Kline, 2006:112).

In Nel *et al.* (2013:61) accommodation is described as different ways of teaching assessment or testing. Situations change, but the content of the teaching, where adjustments are made to remove the barrier of the disability, remains the same. These changes are made to assist learners in accessing the curriculum.

Adaptations, on the other hand, are described by Janney and Snell (2000:16-17) as "changes to the learning task requirements". Changes in the teaching methods used, the teaching materials used, and the teaching and learning environment are necessary. Nel *et al.* (2013:61) furthermore emphasise that before teachers can implement the necessary adaptations, accommodations or modifications, they

should first identify their learners' learning styles to ensure that they cater to the needs of each learner.

2.8.2 Active learning

In constructivist theory, it is important for the teacher to know that a learner-centred, activity-based teaching approach is key. The most important theories of constructivism, such as those of Vygotsky, Erickson and Bronfenbrenner, contend that knowledge is actively constructed and reconstructed as the person develops to higher levels of understanding (Nel *et al.* (2013:29). Donald *et al.* (2010:80) assert that people are not passively influenced by forces around them, but are active agents who make meaning of their lives within and through their social-cultural contexts.

2.8.3 Peer support

This involves helping learners to support the learning of their peers. This can take many forms: sometimes older learners can assist younger learners. At other times, learners who are achieving at a higher level help children of the same age who may be struggling to learn (Garner, 2009:120).

Peer support also becomes evident when two learners work together on learning tasks; often, students are often very good at explaining to each other in 'student' language. The peer tutor helps the tutee learn, practise or review an academic skill that the teacher has planned. Both benefit from this strategy, and the learner is able to learn more effectively from a classmate whose thinking process is closer to his/hers than is that of an adult (Lerner and Kline, 2006:115; Nel *et al.*, 2013:129).

Mavuso (2015:459) asserts that in using peer support as a strategy, teachers should begin by selecting students who would act as peers and then train them in class activities. Peer supporters must facilitate the participation of students with disabilities; contribute to the development of individualised education plan goals; support behaviour intervention plans; provide frequent positive feedback; model age-

appropriate and contextually relevant communication skills; and facilitate interaction with other learners.

Nel *et al.* (2013:130) refer to several ways in which teachers and schools have used peer tutoring effectively including **cross-age tutoring**, where older learners work with younger learners by coming into the classroom and listening to reading or providing individual assistance with numeracy or literature.

The second method is that learners who are fluent in a required language acquire a **"buddy"** to assist in developing linguistic competence. Learners can be rewarded for the progress that their buddies make so they will have a vested interest in their achievements.

Lastly, set up a **homework centre** before or after school. Find learners who show academic ability and the potential to teach others and who will commit time as mentors to help others with homework and revision for tests and exams. The mentors work under the supervision of a teacher and acquire points towards a certificate in community service (Nel *et al.*, 2013:130).

2.8.4   Scaffolding

Woolfolk (2010:266) is of the opinion that most diverse learners need a great deal of systematic scaffolding; some need it for a very long time, while others need very little, and this is why the curriculum needs to be flexible.

Scaffolding is a useful metaphor for enabling learning as teachers provide supports and frameworks that allow learners to access the curriculum, construct their own knowledge and master academic skills (Nel *et al.*, 2013:131).

Different learners will require different scaffolding, depending on their current readiness to learn. All learners need scaffolding to support them in moving from their current skill to a more difficult level. Scaffolding can take on a number of instructional

forms, including explanations, modelling, demonstrating and questioning (Donald *et al.*, 2002:112).

Furthermore, scaffolding can also be embedded into tasks, like providing opening sentences for paragraphs, structures for essays and steps in maths problems. Vocabulary banks, illustrations and clues to where answers can be found can scaffold access to comprehension tasks. Allowing learners to use dictionaries and calculators can also build confidence and enable success. As learners become proficient in the given skill, the scaffolds can be removed, only to be replaced with the scaffolds required to master the next skill (Donald *et al.*, 2002:112).

2.8.5 Cooperative learning

Donald *et al.* (2010:89-90), Lerner and Kline, (2006:390) and Lewis and Doorlag (2006:144) agree that cooperative learning is an instructional method where learners work together toward a common goal in small groups or teams. The tasks may range in size, from solving problems to putting together group presentations to the class.

Cooperative learning is a way of teaching in which learners work together to ensure that all members in the group have learnt the same content. In cooperative learning, groups are organised and tasks are structured for learners to work together to reach a goal, solve a problem, make a decision, or produce a product (DBE, 2010:62).

Landsberg (2005:206), Nel *et al.* (2013:297) and Woolfolk (2010:323) are all in agreement that cooperative learning may be useful to support learners who experience problems in mathematics, as they tend to learn from the example of others. Some learners tend to understand the content better if peers help them, because the latter are on the same cognitive level and their explanations are generally simpler and clearer that those of the teacher.

Landsberg (2005:206) states that some learners do not function well in groups and become passive members of the group, without giving any input, especially if the other learners are familiar with the concepts. Such learners should not be placed in

groups with one or two dominant learners, as the latter tend to take over and do everything in the group and for the group.

2.8.6 Multi-level teaching

Multi-level teaching is an approach that assumes the principles of individualisation, flexibility and inclusion for all learners, regardless of their personal skills levels. Teachers should unconditionally accept learners who experience barriers and involve all learners in all classroom activities (DBE, 2010:58).

According to Garner (2009:95), the first stage in planning a differentiation approach is to focus on the content of what is going to be taught. This has to be matched to the aptitudes and capabilities of the learner, and is obviously heavily reliant on there being a suitable and accurate baseline assessment. This will tell the teacher on what level of achievement the learner is operating at and how best to choose the content.

Roberts (2007:2) emphasises that, when planning instruction for a multilevel class, teachers must first consider the varied proficiency levels of their students. In general, many students perform at the same or similar level; however, there are always students who perform "below" level and others who perform "above" level.

Roberts (2007:2) further suggests four ways to group students: pair work (two students working together); group work (three to ten students working together); team work (teams of students working together in competition with other teams) and whole class work (the entire class participating in an activity). The use of grouping strategies has been found to be an effective management tool in multilevel settings to ensure efficient use of teacher and learner time. Learners assist each other, which frees the teacher to work with individuals or small groups (Roberts, 2007:2).

The DBE (2010:59) mentions that multilevel teaching advocates for one lesson with varying methods of learning, teaching and assessment. This lesson must include a variety of teacher techniques, aimed at reaching learners at all levels, including the following:

Consideration of learners' learning styles when planning presentation methods; involving learners in the lesson through questioning aimed at different levels of thinking (Blooms Taxonomy); acknowledging that some learners will need adjusted expectations; allowing learners to choose a method of their preference or competence in demonstrating knowledge, skills and values; accepting that these different methods are of equal value; and assessing learners in terms of their differences (DBE, 2010:59).

2.8.7 Individual Support Plan (ISP)

The term Individual Education Plan (IEP) is an internationally used term. However, in South Africa, the SIAS document refers to the ISP (Individual Support Plan) (Nel *et al.*, 2013:68). According to the Department of Education (DBE, 2010), an individual support plan is designed for learners who need additional support or expanded opportunities, developed by educators in consultation with the parents and the School-Based Support Team (DBE, 2010:6).

Lerner (2003:64) describes an IEP as a written plan for a particular learner that prescribes specific educational objectives for that learner. According to Lerner (2003:64), it is a management tool for the entire assessment-teaching process, which involves all assessment and teaching procedures. Some learners will need and IEP for only a short period of time, and others for a longer period. The IEP must be a collaborative effort, involving the teacher, the learner, the parents/caregivers, the ILST, DBST as well as other health professionals, as needed.

Landsberg (2005:75) asserts that the IEP must be planned in advance, but that it should also be flexible. Hence there must always be a process of assessing, teaching, supporting, assessing and adapting.

According to Lerner and Kline (2006:47-52), the IEP consists of three stages, namely referral, assessment and instruction.

Stage 1: Referral Stages

The referral stages start the IEP process and consist of two components namely the pre-referral activities and the referral activities.

Stage 2: Assessment Stages

The Assessment stages are the core of the process and involve the tasks of evaluation and developing and writing the IEP.

After the assessment stage has been conducted, an IEP meeting must be set up for all the role players in the collaboration team in order to discuss the learner's IEP.

Stage 3: Instruction Stages

The instruction stages occur after the written document (the IEP) has been completed and involve teaching and the monitoring of the student's progress (Lerner and Kline, 2006:52).

2.8.8   Selecting Curriculum Content

According to the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011:4), curriculum differentiation is a key strategy for responding to the needs of learners with diverse learning styles and needs. It can be done at the level of content, teaching methodologies, assessment and the learning environment.

According to Vogel (2011:16), on selecting the contents, you decide on the special curriculum contents, skills and attitudes that the learners will need to achieve, the outcomes set, and which they will use in order to, need to achieve the outcomes you have set, and which they will use in order to, first, progress to a subsequent school phase and, secondly, to function adequately within the environment and community.

Adapting the curriculum and selecting the contents entail the following three aspects:

Specific information: For specific learner support, it is that material with which the learners are battling and / or still need to master. You may adapt the material to the learners' abilities and needs, and place it within their context.

Competencies: The skills are certain competencies and activities that learners ought to develop in order to apply their knowledge adequately in their environment.

Attitudes: These are attitudes that need to be inculcated in the learners so that they will have the will to improve their knowledge, skills and insights.

It is stated in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE: 2011) that within a differentiated curriculum, the assessment of learners and their learning is integral to the teaching and learning process. As with differentiated instruction, differentiated assessment is based on the thinking that the needs of different learners cannot all be met in the same way (DBE, 2011:4).

2.8.9   Learning Support Programme

Vogel (2011:15) mentions that when a learning programme is compiled, the following five procedures could be adopted:

Firstly, the learner should be assessed (e.g. curriculum-based tests) to determine what he or she has already mastered and the learner's current level of performance. The outcomes must be formulated by drawing up an individual support programme in which short-term objectives are described, as well as what the learner has to achieve by the end of the learning support opportunity. The curriculum content or learning programmes should be selected carefully, as well as the learning support strategies and methods (such as cooperative learning and creative and guided discovery). The methods would be the procedures that the teacher would adopt gradually (step by step) to explain to the learners the strategy intended (e.g. assistive devices and

learning support actions). Finally, learner's progress on what has been taught must be assessed.

2.8.10   Assessment

Lombard (2010:34), as referenced in Nel *et al.* (2013:48), defines assessment as a process of gathering, interpreting, recording and using information about learner responses to an educational task. It is further mentioned that assessment is something done **with** and **for** learners, and not **to** learners. Consequently, "the learners should be the beneficiary of assessment" (Nel *et al.* 2013:48).

According to Lerner and Kline (2006:44) assessment is the process of collecting information about a student that will be used to form judgements and make decisions concerning that student. Woolfolk (2010:494), on the other hand, defines assessment as the process of gathering information about students' learning.

For Lewis and Doorlag (2006:207), assessment is an information-gathering process that includes both formal and informal testing and informal procedures, such as observation, inventories and work sample analysis.

Landsberg (2005:76) states that assessment should be on-going throughout a learning support session to determine whether the learner has mastered the required skills presented. Learned skills should also be applied in different contexts in the classroom and in daily living. Curriculum based tests could be applied after the outcomes set for the learning support have been met, to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge to other contexts.

Vogel (2011:18), on the other hand, mentions that assessment always takes place in the light of the outcomes of learner support. This is done by continually assessing learners to determine their progress towards achieving the outcomes. Teachers need to make use of various assessment techniques: tests and examinations are not enough. Additional means of assessment include the assessment of projects

completed by learners working in groups, and individual assessment, such as portfolio assessment and oral work.

The results obtained from the assessment tell you which outcomes the learners have mastered and which they are still battling with. They also provide information to help you adapt your learning support programme; thereby improving your provision for learner needs (Vogel, 2011:18).

2.9   CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the emergence of inclusive education and the influences it has had internationally and in local schools. Policy perspectives regarding inclusive education and how these influence the education system were described.

Intellectual difficulties as a barrier to learning, with mild intellectual disability as the main focus, were emphasised and different support structures to assist and support learners with barriers were discussed.

The next chapter will explain the processes involved in solving the researcher's question as to the experiences of Primary School teachers in providing learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in the Port Elizabeth area.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The intent of this chapter is to discuss the research design and research methods followed in this study. The following aspects will be addressed: The research paradigm; gaining entry; the role of the researcher; research design and methodology; selection of participants; contextual description of the research data collecting methods; data analysis methods; measures used to ensure trustworthiness; and ethical aspects.

3.2   RESEARCH PARADIGM

Paradigms are perspectives or ways of looking at reality; they are 'the frames of reference we use to organise our observations and reasoning' (Babbie, 2007:31). Babbie (2007:32) further describes paradigms as 'models or frameworks for observation and understanding which shape both what we see and how we understand it'.

The interpretive aspect means that the approach seeks to understand people's living experience from the perspective of people themselves, which is often referred to as the *emic* perspective or the 'inside' perspective (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011:14).

It can therefore be said that this study evidently places emphasis on the interpretive approach, which identifies the significance of these wide-ranging contexts on people's lives.

3.3   GAINING ENTRY

A letter for admission was submitted to the Department of Education requesting permission to conduct research at the four participating schools. Upon receiving approval from the Department of Education (see Appendix F), the researcher requested permission from the principals of the four participating schools by means of consent letters (see Appendix C) to conduct interviews with homogeneous teachers at the respective schools. Invitations were sent to the teachers themselves to take part in the research study, and a letter of consent was personally handed to each of the participants.

Within the consent forms distributed, it was clearly stated that all participants are to ensure that the study remains confidential. It was also conveyed that the research participants would not be requested to disclose their names or the names of their schools when answering interview questions. Data collected during this study will be retained under lock and key on a password protected computer for five years. There were no known or anticipated risks to the participants of this study.

3.4   ROLE OF RESEARCHER

The importance of the enquirer's social relationship with the participants, as advised by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:335), necessitates a description of his or her role and status within the group or at the site. The preferred research role is that of a person who is unknown at the site – in other words, an outsider (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:335).

The role of the researcher in this study was to identify suitable participants, knowledgeable regarding the field of study. The researcher was responsible for conducting all interviews with the selected participants. Part of the data collection process was to obtain learners' workbooks, test books and observation records from teachers teaching learners who require learning support – in the context of this study, those with MID's.

After all interviews had been conducted and recorded, transcriptions were formulated immediately. The transcriptions were used to analyse the data captured during the interviews. Interview transcriptions were typed out verbatim.

3.5   RESEARCH APPROACH

The qualitative research approach was used in this study. The qualitative method is described as naturalistic and humanistic and therefore true to life. Qualitative research was selected for this study as it would afford the researcher the opportunity to record and understand the participants on their own terms. It also allowed the researcher to obtain the genuine feelings, concerns and viewpoints of educators regarding support and intervention strategies in respect of learners with MID's.

Hartas (2010:16) mentions that methodology focuses on the specific ways, the strategies or methods we use to understand social reality. In contrast, Newby (2010:92) holds that qualitative research deals much more with the processes that drive behaviour and the experiences of life. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people choose to live their lives, the meanings they give to their experiences and their feelings about the condition (Newby, 2010:92).

Williams (2007:67) holds that qualitative research is a holistic approach that involves discovery. Qualitative research is also described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences.

For Creswell (2007:37), qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

To study the selected problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a nature setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants,

the reflectivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem (Creswell, 2007:37).

Newby (2010:116) agrees with Creswell (2007), asserting that qualitative approaches are soft, descriptive and concerned with how and why things happen as they do. They draw up insight and interpretation and allow researchers to draw on their subjective responses to evidence.

3.6   RESEARCH DESIGN

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:269) assert that the qualitative research design differs inherently from the quantitative research design in that it does not usually provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan or a fixed recipe to follow. In quantitative research, the design determines the researcher's choices and actions, while in qualitative research the researcher's choices and actions will determine the design or strategy

Basit (2010:35) states that the purpose of the research dictates how a study must be designed and carried out. He further mentions that whatever paradigm researchers select, the methodology they choose, the approach they take and the methods they apply in their research, all need to have fitness for purpose – meaning that all have to be suitable for examining the construct under scrutiny, answering the research questions or testing the hypotheses.

This study used a case study research design. A case study is described as an investigation of a single instance, usually with the goal of identifying and perhaps understanding how an issue arose, how a problem was resolved, often with the purpose of isolating critical incidents that act as decision points for change (De Vos *et al.,* 2005:270-271; Williams, 2007;68; McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:343-345; Newby, 2010:115).

In this study, only four schools were used out of approximately fifty primary schools in the Northern suburbs of Port Elizabeth. Most of the teachers at the four

participating schools had not received any training in learning support, while only a few teachers were in possession of a 'remedial' certificate. Due to the fact that there were no special schools in the Northern Suburbs, many learners experiencing barriers to learning were subjected to remaining on a waiting list for up to two years. Teachers were despondent and frustrated, and those with a 'remedial' qualification were either expected to teach extra classes for learners with barriers or none at all due to an already massive workload, overcrowded classrooms and a shortage of teachers at the schools.

Teachers without a qualification in learning support do not have the time or energy to assist these learners and therefore learners get passed on to the next grade without proper knowledge or support. The teachers participating in this study make it very clear that they were not able to support these learners, as they had not received the necessary training and did not know how to deal with barriers to learning.

Furthermore, the learners who experience barriers to learning drop out of school at a very young age, due to their inability to grasp the work at hand, frustration and a lack of support from teachers, parents and the support services at the Department of Education.

3.7   SAMPLING AND POPULATION

Johnson and Christensen (2008:222) describe sampling as selecting a sample from a population. They believe that sampling allows one to "study the characteristics of a subset (called the sample), selected from a larger group (called population), to understand the characteristics of the larger group". Sampling refers to a group of individuals from whom data are collected (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:129).

In purposeful sampling, a researcher "selects participants because they have some defining characteristics that make them the holders of data needed in the study" (Creswell, 2011:79). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:138) on the other hand advise that, in purposeful sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest.

On the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population, a judgment is then made about which subjects should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research.

The researcher uses purposive sampling to make it clear that the sample is selective; he/she does not seek to represent the wider population (Basit, 2010:52). It is also done for a purpose; in this case, to find out from participating teachers, by means of semi-structured interviews, how they provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities at particular schools.

3.8 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Purposive sampling was conducted with eight teachers who are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest. The teachers were selected from both the Foundation- and Intermediate Phases. The criteria for the selecting the participants were discussed in Chapter One (see Section 1.9.1).

TABLE 3.1: Summary of description of participants

Participant	Race and Gender	Teaching and other Responsibilities	Qualifications	Training in learning support	Teaching experience
1	Female Indian	Post level 1 teacher (intermediate phase-Grade 5) Grade Head	B.Ed. Honours: Inclusive Education	Yes	9 years
2	Female Coloured	Post Level 1 teacher (Foundation Phase-Grade 3) ILST assistant	Higher Diploma in Education	No	11 years
3	Female Coloured	Acting Head of Department	Diploma in Education III	Yes	29 years

		(Foundation Phase) Grade 6 Data capturer SASAMS	Junior Primary; ACE-Remedial		
4	Male Coloured	Deputy Principal Discipline, Curriculum	BA. Honours	No	35 years
5	Female Coloured	Post Level 2 Intermediate Phase Head of Department Grade 6 ILST- - Coordinator	Senior Primary 111Diploma in Education; ACE-SNE; Honours in Learning Support	Yes	20 years

6	Female Black	Post Level 1 teacher Intermediate Phase-Grade 6 SADTU- Branch secretary	Bachelor of Arts in Education (BA)	No	26 years
7	Female Coloured	Post Level 1 teacher Intermediate Phase Gr. 5 Secretary Governing Body	Bachelor of Arts in Education BA	No	3 years
8	Female Indian	Post Level 1 Intermediate Phase	Junior Primary III Diploma in Education	No	30 years

3.9 CONTEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

In qualitative research, the context is accepted in a naturalistic way where the researcher is usually present. The context is acknowledged as having an impact on the participants and on the data collected. It holds the idea, in social science, that the meaning of human creations, words, actions and experiences can be ascertained only in relation to the context in which they occur. Personal and social contexts are included (Terre Blanche, Durheim and Painter, 2006:275).

"The commitment to understanding human phenomenon in context, as they are lived, using context-derived terms and categories, is at the heart of interpretive research and the development of methodologies for understanding human phenomenon 'in context' is arguably the central achievement of qualitative methodology." (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:276).

The contexts of this research were both personal and social. The personal views of teachers were revealed through semi-structured interviews. The researcher analysed these interviews within the context of inclusive education.

The researcher in this study viewed each school individually. Teachers as participants were also viewed as individuals, possessing different experiences of teaching learners with MID's within mainstream primary schools.

3.9.1 Selection of a site

Site selection refers to the site selected to locate people involved in a particular event where the data will be gathered (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:326).

The research was conducted in the Port Elizabeth area, Eastern Cape Province. Four schools from various socio-economic backgrounds participated in the study. From each of these four schools, three teachers were selected to participate in unstructured interviews.

School A

School A was a mainstream school, with five learner support classes. The school was situated in a poverty-stricken environment, where unemployment and gangster activities were rife. At the time of conducting the study, the school enrolment was 675 learners in total. The researcher gathered that 167 of the learners had been diagnosed by professionals, such as educational psychologists, as having mild intellectual disabilities. The staff component consisted of 19 Post Level One teachers, an acting principal, one acting deputy principal and three heads of departments although five educators were trained in remedial therapy. The language of teaching and learning (LOLT) was Afrikaans, while the learner population was Coloured. The learner support classes at School A existed before the move to inclusive education. These classes were the then adaptation classes.

School A was one of a few schools with adaptation classes and the only school to retain these classes after the introduction of inclusive education. These classes were retained primarily because of the vast numbers of learners with barriers to learning in the area surrounding the school and at many other schools in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. The learner support classes accommodate learners who have been assessed by a professional (educational psychologist) as having mild (sometimes moderate to severe) intellectual disabilities, but who cannot be placed in the very few special schools in the area and the very long waiting list for such placement.

The learners were placed in these learner support classes with teachers who had been trained in learning support. Many successes were achieved in these classes and sometimes learners returned to the mainstream class because of good progress made. Learners worked according to their ability levels, in their ability groups, and individual attention was applied, where necessary. Learners were also skilled in different practical skills. For example, girls were taught to do knitting or needlework. Many struggled with academic work, but showed interest in these practical skills. They would then be sent to a special school at the age of 14 or 15 years to follow their chosen career. Many of the other schools in the area opted to send their learners with barriers to School A for assistance and support.

Many learners with barriers to learning were kept at the mainstream schools without assistance and support and sent to School A only when they were almost ready to exit school. By then, these learners had a huge backlog and it would be impossible to support them at that stage. School A, therefore, served as a 'special school' with the approval of the Department of Education and was also chosen to be a pilot school for learners with barriers to learning.

School B

School B, a mainstream school, was situated in an area where poverty and socio-economic issues were prevalent. The enrolment of the school was 863, of which 90 per cent were Coloured and 10 per cent Black. The staff component consisted of 27 teachers, one principal, one deputy principal and four heads of department. The school was dual medium, meaning that they used both English and Afrikaans as medium of instruction. The language of teaching and learning (LOLT) was Afrikaans. The school had a learning support teacher, but due to time constraints and overcrowded classes, the teacher was unable to support learners with barriers to learning.

School C

School C was a mainstream school, situated in middle to upper-class area, while most of the people occupying this area were working class. The learner enrolment was 109, and the school was multicultural, in that 70% of the learners were IsiXhosa, and the rest Coloured. The staff component consisted of 23 Post Level One teachers, a principal, one deputy principal and four heads of department. The language of instruction was English. This school had only one learning support teacher, but due to the large class sizes, she was unable to support learners with barriers to learning.

School D

School D was classified as a mainstream school. The school was situated in an area which was termed safe. However, poor socio-economic circumstances included unemployment and illiteracy. The school hosted 648 learners, of whom 52 per cent were Coloured and 48 per cent were Xhosa. The staff component consisted of 13 Post Level One teachers, one principal, one deputy principal, two Heads of Departments and two senior teachers. The language of instruction was English. The learner support teacher at the school was unable to support learners with barriers, due to the overcrowded classrooms.

3.10   DATA COLLECTION METHODS

As described in Chapter One (Section 1.8), various data collection methods were used in this research. In the next section, aspects such as pre-procedural meetings, individual interviews, the interview schedule, documents, records and field notes will be discussed.

3.10.1   Pre-procedural meetings

Informal meetings with all the participants were arranged, and both the interviewer and interviewee agreed upon a quiet, private and comfortable venue. Chairs were arranged appropriately next to each other to encourage informality, relaxation and adequate space for discussion. The researcher established rapport with the interviewees to put them at their ease and at the same time field notes were taken via posing informal questions.

3.10.2   Individual Interviews

The researcher used face-to-face interviews to collect data in terms of an interview schedule. The schedule listed all the questions that would be asked. The questions were related directly to the research questions and the objectives of the study and followed a given sequence that was adhered to in each interview. Probing questions

formed part of the interview and the form of the interview was semi-structured (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:206).

3.10.2.1   Interview Schedule

Initially, the researcher asked the main question, followed by probing and clarifying, whenever necessary. The main question that guided this study was:

What is it like to provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

To probe, the researcher asked the following further questions:

- *What is the nature of the intellectual disabilities that you encounter in your classroom?*
- *How do you provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your classroom?*
- *What challenges do you encounter in providing learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your learning area?*
- *What intervention programmes are in place at your school to support learners with mild intellectual disabilities?*
- *In your opinion, how should learners with mild intellectual disabilities be supported in your school?* (see Appendix H)

3.10.3   Documents and Records

Documents and records, as advised by Henning *et al*. (2005:99), are useful and valuable source of evidence in research. Of importance is that researchers using the data collection instruments should focus on information relevant to the topic being investigated (Creswell, 2007:82). As discussed in Chapter One (Section 1.8.2), documents such as learners' books and records in which teachers documented their observations about the barriers experienced by learners were used as part of the data collection process in this study.

3.10.4   Field Notes

Field notes can be defined as the recordings of observations and reflections on participants. These observations will occur over time and will also change from the initial plan, as needed. During and immediately after the observations, the researcher takes field notes to record not only what is seen and heard, but also reflections on what has occurred (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:350-351).

In this study, the researcher took field notes during the pre-interviews and interviews to record and report all observations and reflections observed during the interactions with the interviewees. Observations about the selected sites as well as the body language of the participating teachers were reflected in a journal.

3.11   METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

In this study, the researcher obtained informed written consent from all participants (teachers and parents), as well as the four principals of the participating schools, after receiving consent from the Department of Education. Written consent for the use of learners' workbooks was sought and received from the parents (See Appendix B).

The researcher was part of the data collection process, and all the views of the participants as well as the actual observations at the sites were captured. Questions were structured in two key local languages (English and Afrikaans) in order for participants to be comfortable with the language and to ensure that the questions were clear to them.

Finally, the identities of schools, participants and learners were protected by means of pseudonyms, and participants were informed that they would be free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

Merriam (2009:198-199) states that research findings are trustworthy to the extent

that there has been some accounting for their validity and reliability; that is, the extent to which they can be replicated in another study.

In this study, data was gathered consistently from the participants by means of semi-structured interviews, and learners' documents (workbooks, tests and observation sheets) were requested from participating teachers. The parents' consent to view the learners' documents was obtained (see Appendix B).

3.11.1   Credibility

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:102) refer to credibility as the extent to which the results approximate reality and are judged to be accurate, trustworthy and reasonable.

Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012:29) define credibility as the qualitative parallel to internal validity (the confidence that a researcher has that his or her intervention caused the change in the dependent variable). Credibility is established by sustained involvement in the research setting; peer debriefing; member checks, monitoring self-perceptions and the use of multiple data sources. Throughout this study credibility was obtained through the citation of related articles by renowned authors in the field of inclusive education.

3.11.2   Transferability

Marshall and Rossman (2011:252) define transferability as ways in which the research findings will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice.

Transferability invites readers to draw inferences from the study after applying the findings to their own situations (Briggs, Coleman and Morrison, 2012:202).
The researcher ensured transferability in that all data was supported by sufficient evidence, and compared it to quotations from the respective participants.

3.11.3   Dependability

Marshall and Rossman (2011:253) describe dependability as showing the ways in which the researcher plans to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting.

Dependability parallels reliability, which means that there is consistency in the measurement of the targeted variables. Establishing dependability requires that the researcher perform a dependability audit, showing the points at which changes occurred in the research process and understandings related to that process (Lapan *et al.*, 2012:29).

Dependability was achieved within the study in that record keeping; semi-structured interviews accompanied by voice recordings have been saved and thoroughly analyzed. All questions were structured and posed in the same manner, in essence there was a sense of consistency and therefore it can be said that none of the information gathered from the various participants can be altered.

3.11.4   Confirmability

Marshall and Rossman (2011:253) define conformability as ways in which qualitative researchers can parallel the traditional concept of objectivity.

Confirmability parallels objectivity, which relates to the absence of personal bias. Confirmability is based on the provision of a chain of evidence so that the reader can see the source of the data and illustrative examples from the data that support the researcher's conclusions (Lapan *et al.*, 2012:29).

This particular aspect was achieved throughout the study in ensuring accurate record keeping of work done, where auditing of data was allowed and which furthermore increases the credibility and trustworthiness of this research.   A confirmable audit trail of field notes, transcripts, consent forms will be kept safe.

3.12   METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is described as 'structured' and 'flexible' (Hennink *et al.*, 2011:205). For Grbich (2007:25) data analysis is an on-going process, which simply entails tracking and checking data to see what they are telling us, and which areas need to be followed up; and interrogating the data to see where they are leading the researcher.

The analysis of data in this study was a continuous and reflective process. The semi-structured interviews were recorded individually, and transcriptions were done verbatim. The researcher looked for consistencies and contradictions from the different interview responses, and themes as well as sub-themes were identified. Furthermore, a few sets of memos were drafted to capture a preliminary analysis of individual, school-based and cross-participant findings.

For the purpose of this study the researcher made use of documents, including learners' workbooks and test books, as well as the observation notes used by teachers to document their observations regarding the learners.

3.13   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, the researcher made every effort to ensure that the research adhered to the ethical rules laid down by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa (UNISA). At first, the researcher applied for ethics approval from the College of Education Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa for clearance, and permission was granted (see Appendix A).

Secondly, the researcher requested permission from the Department of Education to conduct research within the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth (Appendix E). The District Director of the Port Elizabeth District granted permission (see Appendix F).

Thirdly, the researcher requested permission from School Principals, including the approval letter from the District Director (Department of Education), to conduct research at their respective schools and permission (see Appendix C).

Finally, invitations were handed to participants to conduct semi-structured interviews, and informed consent forms were completed by all participants. Participants were informed that participation within this study would be on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, participants were informed that they would be free to stop the interview at any given time and may choose not to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable. They were also told that there were no anticipated risks in the study (see Appendix D).

The participants were notified that a concerted effort to maintain confidentiality would be made and that they would not be requested to disclose their names or the names of their school when answering interview questions. The researcher also guaranteed that the names of schools or participants would not be revealed in any reporting. All participants were treated respectfully and their sacrifice in time and energy through participating was taken into consideration and appreciated at all times (see Appendix G).

3.13.1   Informed Consent

In this study, the researcher submitted a letter to the Department of Education requesting permission to conduct research at the four participating schools. On receipt of the letter continuing the requested consent, the school principals of the four participating schools were approached and invited to participate. Informed written consent was obtained from the principals as well as the participants. An invitation to take part in the study was handed to each participating teacher personally by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher adhered to the ethical measures discussed below.

3.13.2   Confidentiality

Researchers should make it clear to the participants in a study that their commitment to confidentiality may be overridden by their legal or moral duty to report incidents of harm.

In this study, a concerted effort to maintain confidentiality was made, and research participants were not requested to disclose their names or the name of their school when answering interview questions. Information on the tape recorder was kept under lock and key and was discarded immediately on the completion of the research process. The findings of this study are being published in a form of a dissertation and articles and may be presented in conferences, but without disclosing the name of any participant.

3.14   SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

In this chapter, the researcher focused on the research design and research methods followed in the study. The following aspects were addressed: the research paradigm, gaining entry, the role of the researcher, research design and methodology, selection of participants, contextual description of the research data collecting methods, data analysis methods, measures used to ensure trustworthiness, and ethical aspects. Trustworthiness was discussed and explained for the understanding of the reader.

The chapter to follow, Chapter Four, will focus on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained from individual interviews, records and the field notes reflected in a journal. Furthermore, I will also undertake to discuss the literature control that elaborates on the findings.

For De Vos *et al.* (2005:333), the purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to produce findings. Qualitative analysis therefore transforms data into findings. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:333).

4.2 PRESENTATION OF DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used as one instrument to collect data, as advised by Briggs *et al.* (2012:254). Face-to-face interviews enables the interviewer to observe visual clues, for example, relating to the layout of an office. As a result, they may also allow the interviewer to observe body language, which may indicate comfort or discomfort, giving the interviewer clues on how to proceed. In this study, selected extracts of interviews will be presented verbatim.

Lapan *et al.* (2012:90) mention that semi-structured interviews are used to collect similar information from a larger sample of individuals, numbering at least twelve to fifteen, usually not more than ninety.A number of records containing examples of workbooks, test books and observation sheets from teachers were used as part of the data collection process. Consent was afforded by the parents of learners whose books were analysed.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:361) state that a learner's file may contain records of testing, attendance, anecdotal comments from teachers, information from other agencies, and a family profile. Furthermore, the documentation collected is used not so much for what it tells about the student, but rather what it suggest about the people who make the records.

The following table represents the themes and sub-themes identified from the interviews.

TABLE 4.1: Identified themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
4.3 **THEME 1**: Mild Intellectual difficulties observed by teachers in primary mainstream schools.	4.3.1 Significant difficulties in reading 4.3.2 Severe difficulties in comprehension 4.3.3 Low concentration span
4.4 **THEME 2**: Learning support approaches used by teachers.	4.4.1 Multi-level teaching 4.4.2 Individual support to learners 4.4.3 Practical activities

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
4.5 **THEME 3**: Challenges experienced by teachers in providing learning support.	4.5.1 Overcrowded classrooms 4.5.2 Addressing socio-economic barriers 4.5.2.1 Parental involvement 4.5.2.2 Poverty 4.5.2.3 Decline in moral value system 4.5.2.4 Extreme violence and gangster activities 4.5.2.5 Unemployment 4.5.2.6 Substance and alcohol abuse 4.5.3 Language of learning and teaching 4.5.4 Curriculum implementation
4.6 **THEME 4**: Teachers' capabilities in terms of supporting learners with MID's in the classroom.	4.6.1 Untrained teachers in learning support 4.6.2 Non-functional support structures
4.7 **THEME 5**: Teachers' attitudes in teaching learners with MID's.	4.7.1 Negative attitudes 4.7.2 Positive attitudes
4.8 **THEME 6**: Views on how learners with MID's should be supported	4.8.1 Learner support classrooms 4.8.2 Professional support from the Department of Education 4.8.3 Ability groupings

4.3 THEME 1: INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES OBSERVED BY TEACHERS IN PRIMARY MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

TABLE 4.1.1: Intellectual disabilities observed by teachers in primary mainstream schools
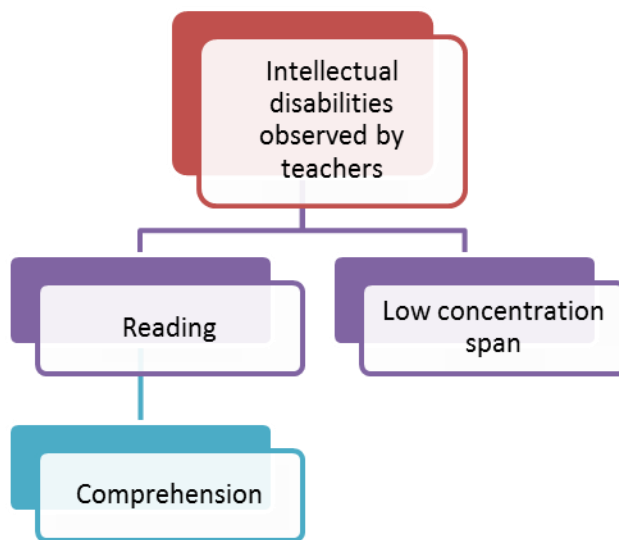
The participants in this study reported that they observed mild intellectual disabilities in their classrooms, such as significant difficulties in reading, severe difficulties in comprehension, and low concentration span. These observations will now be discussed and the views of the participants will be lifted.

4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Significant difficulties in reading

All of the participants agreed that reading remained a huge challenge at their respective schools. This challenge was prominent amongst those learners classified as experiencing mild intellectual disabilities. According to the participants, the common intellectual disability they were faced with daily was poor reading. The views of some of the participant are captured in the selected extracts below:

P4: *"The learners struggle to read. Some of them struggle from limited space orientation, where they see the "p" for a "b", and the "s" and the "z" or the "s" and a "2". They are unable to discern that, but the biggest problem, even with mainstream*

learners; reading is the greatest problem, because if you cannot read, you cannot understand the questions."

P1*: "So you are looking at a thirteen-year old in Grade 5. And the thirteen-year old cannot read, and he cannot spell a word, and it's basic words that we're talking about, Grade 1 and 2 words". "Why can't you read this?" "I'm not able to read this part", which means they cannot read, but what did they do. They listened to all the other 30 children that read, and now they are able to read that."*

P6: *"You have your children who have difficulty in reading, the basics, and your phonics. If I can cite one example ...; I have now a boy in my class, a Grade 6 boy, who does not know the difference between no (the opposite of yes) and know (to know something), the one that means Ok, you know."*

After probing the nature of the disabilities experienced in the classroom, the response was as follows:

P7: *"Specifically with reading and writing it's a common problem."*

P8: "*Their learning barriers are language. If they come to us for the first time at 10 years old not being able to speak the language, or converse, or read or anything, then we do have a problem.*"

P5: *"They can't tell me, they cannot retell a story that they read. Higher order questioning, thinking and reasoning – it's non-existent."*

My experience as a primary school teacher has clearly broadened my perception that early childhood experiences and the contributions that parents make regarding learners' vocabulary also play a vital role in the acquisition of reading. As a teacher, I have also observed through my years of teaching that learners who are exposed to good communication skills, storytelling and memorising words and books will be able to communicate more effectively and frequently. Vogel (2011:93) concurs, saying that researchers seem to agree that in order to read, learners need to master two

distinct components: *word recognition* and *word analysis* and *reading comprehension.*

Lerner (2003:397) is of the opinion that, since reading is the basic skill for all academic subjects, failure in school can be traced to inadequate reading skills. Westwood (2007:94) feels that in the earliest stages of learning to read, children have not yet built up a large vocabulary of words they know instantly by sight, so they must use their knowledge of letters and groups of letters to help identify unfamiliar words. Children cannot really become independent readers unless they master the code. It is now generally accepted that explicit instruction in phonic principles needs to be part of all early reading programmes (Westwood, 2007:94).

As a researcher, I understand the above to mean that learners may have major difficulties in reading, attributed to the fact that the basic fundamentals of reading have not been consolidated or established in the lower grades. Resources and appropriate reading material are not always available or on the level of the learners. I also think that the home environment of these learners is a major factor in terms of the acquisition of basic language and reading skills. From personal experience, I have come to the conclusion that this gap is due to the illiteracy of parents, the prevailing poverty, the high unemployment rate, the high rate of high school drop-outs, and poor family values and morals.

In a study by Naidoo, Reddy and Dorasamy (2014:164), titled *Reading literacy in primary schools in South Africa: Educator Perspectives on factors affecting reading literacy and strategies for improvement*, it was established that the socio-economic factors that impacted on reading were: lack of early childhood development; poor health care; unemployment, lack of adequate housing; and, to an extent, single parent families.

A study by Hlalethwa (2013:91) titled *Reading difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation phase in inclusive schools in Makapanstad*, also concluded that reading difficulties were exacerbated by various factors, such as socio-economic factors, neurological factors, educational factors and many more. Hlalethwa

(2013:91) further mentions that most teachers are not sure what methods to use when teaching learners to read, with the majority sticking to the one way approach to teaching reading, which hampers learners' reading abilities and encourages low reading levels. Lack of resources also contributes immensely to learners' reading difficulties.

4.3.2   Severe difficulties in comprehension

In this study, severe learning difficulties in comprehension were identified as one of the barriers observed by teachers in their classrooms. In essence, due to reading barriers, participants agreed that comprehension skills were lacking, which stunted the progress of learning and understanding.

Westwood (2007:105) defines reading comprehension as an active reading process through which a reader intentionally constructs meaning and deepens understanding from text. Chomchaiya and Dunworth (2008:102) are of the opinion that readers who are able to recognise the meaning of words automatically are better able to develop reading comprehension than those who spend longer seeking to define words from contextual or other clues in the text.

Reading will not be successful for learning if there is no comprehension (Nel, Nel and Hugo, 2013:96). Vogel (2011:93) emphasises this, saying that comprehension is the main objective of reading. When a person 'reads', both of the components *word analysis and word recognition* and *comprehension* have to function simultaneously before there can be any question of authentic reading (Vogel, 2011:93).

The above sub-theme aims to present an overview of the observations made by participants regarding learners' comprehension skills within the bounds of their respective classrooms on a day-to-day basis. The selected participants' responses included the following:

P5: *"When it comes to questioning or assessments, you know: "Do you understand or can you explain to me?" – then they're gone. They can't tell me; they can't retell a*

story that they read. Higher order questioning, thinking and reasoning – it's non-existent."

P6: *"What is even worse is when they do not understand. So even when I'm giving them a question, they do not understand what they have to do."… "the material that is supposed to be used by a child who is at Grade 6 level that cannot comprehend."*

P1: *"They cannot do anything. Yesterday, I told them, write name, grade listening comprehension. Do you know what they wrote? Name, grade, listening, comprehension, not their name."*

Furthermore, P1 mentioned that *"They … they read Ok, there's nothing wrong with their eyesight, but there's definitely something wrong with understanding and the message getting to the brain. What they have seen and what they have read, it doesn't reach where it's supposed to reach. So when, when I'm teaching and things need to be … I re-explain things and I try other avenues. When it comes to questioning or to assessments, you know: "Do you understand or can you explain to me?" then they're gone. They can't tell me, they can't retell a story that they read. Higher order questioning, thinking and reasoning – it's non-existent."*

Regarding the above statements made by the participants, Navsaria, Pascoe and Kathard (2011:31), who investigated *teachers' perceptions on written language difficulties*, indicate that it is very important that learners leave the Foundation Phase and enter the Intermediate Phase with solid foundation skills that have initiated the development of reading and written language – but that was often not the case. Based on the above statements, I agree with the above scholars. They further mention that learners are passed to the next Grade without having achieved the necessary outcomes of that Grade. The end result is an accumulation of difficulties over time, as is evident in the high failure rate in the Matric examinations.

For Lundberg and Reichenberg (2013:90) the ability to read and comprehend texts is a necessary prerequisite for full participation in modern society. I understand this to mean that teachers have an obligation to do all they can to ensure that students with

intellectual disabilities develop to their full potential, including reading literacy. In their study titled *Developing reading comprehension among students with mild intellectual disabilities,* Lundberg and Reichenberg (2013:90) challenge the common perception that reading comprehension is impossible for people defined as intellectually disabled.

A further study conducted by Pardo (2004:277) emphasises the fact that comprehension instruction in schools, beginning in kindergarten, is crucial. Teachers use their knowledge and understandings of how one learns to comprehend to inform classroom practices so they can most effectively help readers develop the ability to comprehend text.

Naidoo *et al.* (2014:165-166) contend that experienced readers read with meaning, whereas learners with reading difficulty read with comprehension. Therefore, as a researcher and based on the above studies, I feel that in order for all learners to be able to react to the environment they live in, reading and understanding what is read, is fundamental to their progress in life in general. Accompanied by the appropriate learning support strategies, every learner with or without barriers should be successful in reading.

4.3.3 Low concentration span

The participants in this study mentioned that they had learners with a poor concentration span in their classrooms and expressed their concerns in this regard. The participants shared that those learners were unable to understand, act on instructions, or complete tasks. According to the participants, many learners had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

Harpin (2005:2) defines ADHD as a chronic debilitating disorder that may impact on many aspects of an individual's life, including academic difficulties, social skills problems, and strained parent-child relationships. Loe and Feldman (2007:643) state that ADHD is associated with poor grades; poor reading and math standardised test

scores, and increased grade retention. In addition, ADHD is also associated with increased use of school-based services, increased rates of retention and expulsion, and ultimately with relatively low rates of high school graduation and post-secondary education. Children in community samples who show symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, with or without formal diagnosis of ADHD, also show poor academic and educational outcomes (Loe and Feldman, 2007:643).

Garner (2009:50) explains that children who experience ADHD are more inclined to have difficulties in organising their school work, have difficulties with punctuality, and find forward planning to be problematic.

The selected extracts of the participants are as follows:

P1: *"There is a lack of concentration, because he doesn't understand most of the things that you're supposed to do."*

P4: *"….. that they have problems in terms of concentration. They only have a limited attention span …"*

P5: *"With ADD learner, they get lost." "They're lost in that classroom."*

P1: *"With regard to the other ones, the other ones tend to just daydream … they'll just sit and doodle on a page."*

P8: *"Very difficult with the ADHD, because they can't sit still, they can't concentrate; they give us a tough time having to … they distract the rest of the children."*

P3: *"… I think it's because of the frustration that the child does not understand or fully understand what you are trying to teach the child, therefore the child gets disruptive in class and there's a lack of concentration …"*

As a researcher, I understand this theme to highlight one of the most challenging aspects or, better put, daunting task faced by teachers daily. The low concentration

span prevalent amongst learners who are classified as mildly intellectual, ADD or ADHD can often be attributed to home situations, for example, lack of nutrition, lack of sleep and the element of fear; and, in the case of this study, to the socio-economic problems that learners are faced with on a daily basis.

Harpin (2005:2) confirms the above statement, stating that many children with ADHD have very poor sleep patterns, and although they appear not to need much sleep, daytime behaviour is often worse when sleep is badly affected.

The above emphasises some of the elements contributing to low concentration levels.

Landsberg (2005:367) states that due to the emotional problems caused by failure and poor social perception, such learners' motivation and attention is generally poor. This further aggravated their failure in their schoolwork.

Jooste and Jooste in Landsberg (2005:393) advise that, from an information-processing point of view, focused attention and concentration are crucial for the effective functioning of working memory.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Perold, Louw, and Kleynhans (2010:464), suggests that there is a substantial lack of knowledge among teachers in certain key areas of ADHD. This lack of knowledge is a matter of concern, since teachers play a pivotal role in the recognition, referral and treatment of ADHD. Furthermore, children diagnosed with ADHD work best on tasks that they have chosen themselves and that they find interesting. They attend automatically to things they enjoy, but can have great difficulty in doing new things or less enjoyable tasks (Mash & Wolfe, 2005 in Perold, Louw and Kleynhans (2010:464).

My view as a researcher is that teachers who have more experience with learners diagnosed with ADHD generally have more patience and understanding than teachers with less experience. It is also true that not many teachers understand ADHD and view the learners as being rowdy or misbehaving in the class.

4.4 THEME 2: LEARNING SUPPORT APPROACHES USED BY TEACHERS

TABLE 4.1.2: Learning support approaches used by teachers
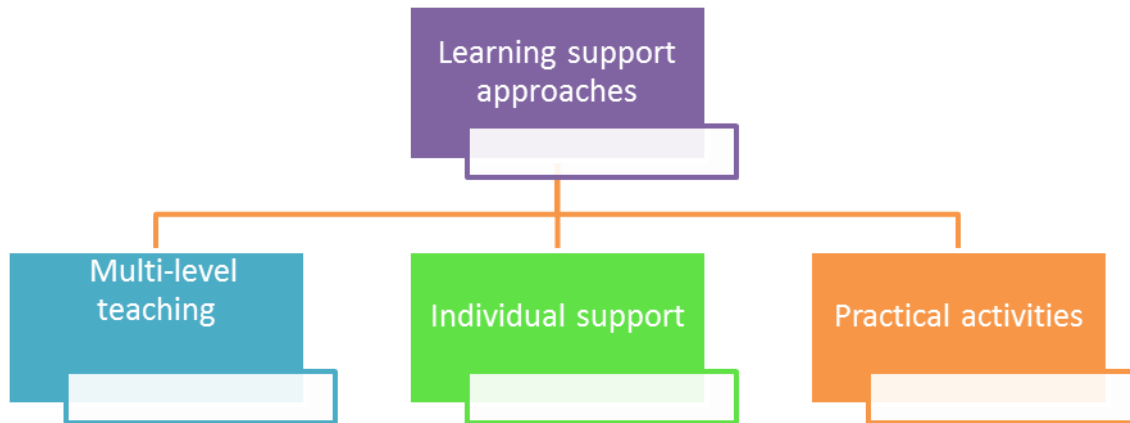
This study found that the participating teachers used numerous learning support approaches to support learners with MID's. Such approaches include multi-level teaching, individually supporting learners, classroom atmosphere e.g. print friendly, obstacle free and attractiveness of the class, and practical activities.

Learning support approaches can be described as the methods used to support and the accommodation of all learners, including those who experience barriers to learning and development, in the classroom (Vogel, 2011:2). For Landsberg (2005:48), the practice of learning support is essentially constructivist in approach. A high degree of flexibility is maintained with regard to the individual learner's course of cognitive development. According to the EWP6 (DoE, 2001), the premise should be that "all children, youth and adults have the potential to learn with all bands of education and they all require support" (DoE, 2001).

Learning support in principle assumes the collaboration of all role-players and the adaptation of the curriculum, peer support and also, where required, specialised

intervention and counselling (Landsberg, 2005:48). For Mavuso (2015:455), the concept learning support included an appropriate referral system within schools and with other relevant stakeholders in the Department of Basic Education and the broader society, and it involves the appropriate placement of learners.

Learning support approaches vary from teacher to teacher largely based on their preference in terms of teaching methodologies. Many participants in this study opted to stick with the familiar methods known to them, thus stunting their growth within the parameters of educating learners with barriers to learning.

These approaches will be discussed in terms of the following sub-theme.

4.4.1   Multi-level teaching

Multi-level teaching or downscaling can be explained as the minimising of work into smaller segments, with the hope that the information will be processed easier. Other scholars refer to downscaling as multi-level teaching. For example, the DBE (2010:58) describes multi-level teaching as an approach that assumes the principles of individualisation, flexibility and inclusion for all learners, regardless of their personal skills levels. The approach on multi-level teaching requires teachers to unconditionally accept learners who experience barriers and involve all learners in all classroom activities. In contrast to preparing different lessons for different learners, multi-level teaching advocates for one lesson, with varying methods of learning, teaching and assessment.

For Westwood (2007:197), the curriculum to be studied may be increased or decreased in terms of depth and complexity. Aspects of the curriculum may be sequenced into smaller units and presented in smaller steps.

Participants from the various schools interviewed, agreed that the work conveyed to learners should be scaled down in order to ensure that learners comprehend and can relate to the content conveyed.

P7: *"We have to scale down the work to meet their needs. We cannot teach above their needs, because they get lost in the process and that's how they get lost in the system, because they just get promoted."*

P2: *"… and then you also have to down-scale and down-grade your same lesson, uhm, you know, to, so that it would adapt or be suitable for the learners with the mild, uhm, intellectual disabilities."*

P5: *"…. I maybe put it into simpler terms so that they can understand it …"*

P6: *"… "the material that is supposed to be used by a child who is at a Grade 6 level, they cannot comprehend that, so what I do is, I deal with them on a much lower level."*

P3: *"Sometimes the learning material that we get is beyond the ability of the child. So you must try to get material that is on the level of that child."*

Based on the above, I can relate to the viewpoints raised by the participants in that this is an overwhelming challenge faced by teachers on a daily basis: learners are unable to work on the level they are supposed to. Therefore, the learning material utilised needs to be altered to suit their individual learning needs.

Westwood (2007:19) concurs, stating that children with intellectual disability also need some high-quality direct teaching, with the content broken down into very simple steps to ensure high success rates.

Vogel (2011:5) opinion is that if teachers are actively supported and given the opportunity to share expertise with others they will be able to create a rich educational opportunity for all learners.

A study conducted by Motitswe (2012:110), titled *Teaching and learning methods in inclusive classrooms in the Foundation Phase*, revealed in the findings that teaching and learning in inclusive classrooms is flexible, because differentiated levels, such

as multi-level teaching, songs and rhymes, and story-telling using pictures, puppets and story books are used. Learners are also allowed to dramatize the stories to show that they understood what was said.

Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:6) portray the difficulties experienced by educators when trying to implement multi-level teaching. They state that in schools where the learner enrolment is relatively low, educators are not challenged only by the diverse learner population, but also have to teach multi-graded classes, which make the implementation of inclusive education even more challenging.

Furthermore, it was found in the above study that participating educators found it difficult to accommodate learners who experienced barriers to learning to work at a pace that suited their special abilities.

The above studies, conducted by various individuals, reflect contrasting views in terms of multi-level teaching. I would agree with Motitswe (2012) that it would be possible to employ this strategy if resources were at hand or improvisation could be carried out. On the other hand, teachers need to be educated or trained in how to support learners on this level.

The DoE (2009c:60) report submitted to the Minister of Education, Ms Angie Motshekga, clearly stated that the best practices for multi-grade classes exist regionally as well as internationally, particularly regarding classroom management and specific learning programme development. It was revealed that no specific training had been provided for teachers teaching multi-grade classes and that there was a lack of policy guidance for these teachers. Further research and support was needed in this area, to achieve educational quality and equity (DBE, 2009c:60).

4.4.2   Individual support to learners

On analysing the research data, it became evident that individual support was one of the prominent responses given by a number of participants.

Nel *et al.* (2013:135) agree that learners with specific learning needs need more structured and individualised intervention and support.

Selected extracts relating to individual support provided to learners include the following:

P1: *"These children need, uhm, learning support, individualised learning support on a continuous basis."*

P3: *"Yah, try to do as much individual support as possible."*

P6: *"I try to handle them on an individual basis, as far as I can."*

P5: *"The only way I give them some sort of support is just to give them a bit more attention, spend a bit more time with them."*

P8: *"These few children that need your attention – a and they really do need the attention – but it's very difficult, because then the others start getting out of hand …".*

The participants clearly emphasised the support provided by teachers in various classroom contexts. Individual support was given; however, this was not always possible to employ, especially if the classrooms were overcrowded.

In order to assist teachers, Westwood (2007:197) suggests that they can vary the level and duration of help given to individuals during a lesson. The classroom can be set up to support more individualised or group work, and teachers may also set individual learning contracts for students.

In addition, Land (2004:1) suggests learning strategies such as "think, pair, share" to promote recall and understanding of new learning. This strategy allows students to reflect individually on a question, pair up with a partner to share and compare answers, and finally give the best answer.

For Ford (2013:8), being able to provide learning opportunities to all students within an inclusive classroom is certainly an advantage of differentiation instruction. Differentiation instruction involves students with learning disabilities, and others with diverse learning needs, being supplied with instructional methods and materials that are matched to their individual needs (Ford, 2013:8).

4.4.3 Practical activities

Practical activities are considered to be an integral part of learning support in terms of all teaching and learning processes. In my opinion, practical activities are also beneficial in that they stimulate the children positively, especially if they are able to relate to that which is being conveyed. In terms of my teaching experience, I have found that not all learners are academically strong; one needs to also introduce practical tasks to stimulate them in the form of life skills that can be used at a later stage in their lives.

The following responses were noted as a possible learning support approach:

P8: *"So that's the ones that I usually would see if they're good at drawing, if they're good at something else, give them books so that they can at least see pictures, and those are the types of things that actually keep them still."*

P4: *"They are more practically inclined. They are more focused on sports activities, and our schools, unfortunately, and then I'm referring to the Northern Areas, are not doing justice in terms of catering for them culturally, sport wise and being involved with practical activities to enhance their performances also."*

P2: *"I make sure that I get enough activities and enough concrete things that he could work with, you know, and get him to do that before we start with our lessons."*

P4: *"… then what I do, I try even to bring a model or a real animal, if it's a cat or a dog or mouse, to school to captivate their attention so then, they say things that you see you remember longer than just to hear it."*

In support of the above statements made by participants, Väyrynen (2003:28) is of the opinion that learners should be offered a variety of activities, resources and environments that are appropriate to their age, interests, strengths and prior achievements. Furthermore, learning can also happen in a variety of activities outside the school through projects, work experience, volunteering, etc.

Nel *et al.* (2013:34) mention that some learners prefer to learn by listening and speaking, while others learn better from visual cues (looking and doing). Mention is also made of three main types of learning styles, of which the three modalities most used in the classroom are auditory, visual and kinaesthetic (Nel *et al.*, 2013:35).

In addition, a study by Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009:506) suggests that teachers should give learners special responsibilities in the classroom. This may include allocating duties to learners or providing them with the opportunity to engage in different tasks in order to learn responsibility and build on their strengths.

Garner (2009:134) echoes that vocational and life skills enable learners to secure a place in the wider community when they finally move from school into employment or training.

4.5 THEME 3: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS IN PROVIDING LEARNING SUPPORT

TABLE 4.1.3: Challenges experienced by teachers
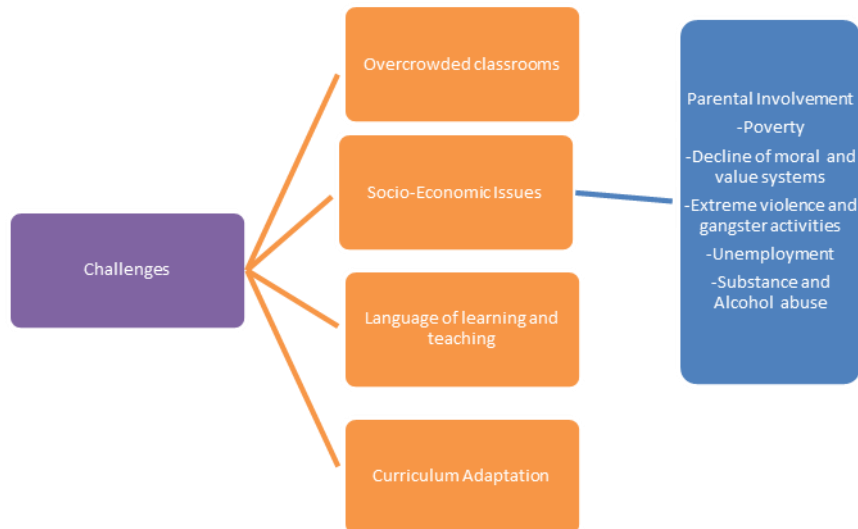
According to the Essential English Dictionary (Collins, 1989:119), a challenge is defined as something new and difficult which requires great effort and determination. The definitions mentioned describe what teachers encounter in their classrooms on a daily basis, rendering them frustrated and despondent. The subthemes listed by the participants as the reason for their feelings of dejection and despondency are explained below.

4.5.1 Overcrowded classrooms

Khan and Iqbal (2012:10162) are of the opinion that a classroom is overcrowded if the number of students exceeds the optimum level to the extent that it causes hindrance in the teaching and learning process. For Khan and Iqbal (2012:10162), focusing on the effect of this very serious problem, it is very clear that teaching is not possible in an environment where the number of students exceeds the acceptable limit.

Nel *et al.* (2013:124) mention that classroom culture can be regarded as the way in which things are done in that classroom and the values, beliefs and attitudes that

inform and sustain a particular way of doing things, whereas Landsberg (2005:456) states that teachers often despair because of the large number of learners in the classrooms and the difficulties they have in trying to control all types of disruptive behaviour.

According to Loe and Feldman (2007:649), teachers perceive class size to be one of the major barriers to the inclusion of ADHD students in regular education. Small class sizes will probably result in the use of innovative educational approaches, which are precluded in the current system.

Classroom size was clearly a major concern for the majority of the participants in this study. Upon posing the question regarding challenges experienced within the domain of the classroom, these were among the responses:

P1: *"I would say if I have to list them as the classroom sizes. That's my greatest challenge."*

P7: *"We also have that problem where we're sitting with too many LSEN children in one class, so if the classes were smaller, it would be easier to accommodate these learners."*

P6: *"The disadvantage being that we have big classes … and I feel that if we could have smaller classes so that you could be able to give individual attention to the children."*

P8: "*Now the challenge that I have, it's very difficult when there is forty children in the class."*

P5: *"I think also the challenge is the class size … there is no way I can offer the support that needs to be done …"*

A sense of despondency was detected amongst the teachers, battling to do justice to learners with barriers in an already overcrowded mainstream class. This seemed to

be a common problem in all the participating schools; the teachers felt inadequate and almost destitute in their mandate to support learners with barriers to learning under these conditions. Many studies have been conducted on this phenomenon of overcrowded classrooms, as briefly introduced below.

A study on reading literacy in South African primary schools conducted by Naidoo, Reddy and Dorasammy (2014:160) established that a smaller class size supported quality education. Lower class sizes allow for more interaction between the educator and learner, resulting in quality teaching and learning. The recommended educator-learner ratio and class size in South African primary schools is forty learners per educator (SACMEQ, 2011). Hence, class size may also be a factor that impacts on the level of literacy of learners (Naidoo *et al.*, 2014:160).

It can be said that the learner to educator ratio could directly impact on the level of quality of schooling provided. The more overcrowded the classrooms, the fewer teachers are able to provide personal support to those learners who require individual attention. This in turn contributes to the very low morale that exists amongst teachers because of the overcrowded classes in which they are unable to attend to learners' individual needs.

The issue of overcrowded classes is also a concern for the Department of Basic Education. As a result, in her Budget speech of 2012, the Minister of Education, Angie Mosthekga, announced the Department's strategic objective, aimed at reducing class size in South African public schools. The funding secured was dispersed amongst provincial departments, to ensure that targeted schools would be provided with additional posts in order to reduce the learner-educator ratio (Parliament, September 2012).

The ratio in the Eastern Cape was envisaged as twenty-nine learners per teacher (29.1:1). However, this has not been achieved. The average teacher-learner ratio in the schools participating in this research ranged from forty to forty-five learners per teacher (40.1:1). Although there is clear policy regarding the teacher: learner ratio at all schools, certain school level factors are impacting on the sizes of classes. These

include shortages of classrooms; inequality of work distribution amongst teachers; negative incentives for principals to take in additional learners, and shortages of subject specialists (DBE, 2009c:59).

The DBE report regarding overcrowding released in October 2009 revealed that the issue of overcrowding required further investigation and amelioration. Apart from the necessary plan to relieve overcrowding in schools over a period of time, based on national resources, specific methods and approaches to teaching large classes effectively are available, particularly in the area of classroom management principles (DBE, 2009c:59).

4.5.2   Socio-economic barriers

This particular sub-theme highlights the prevalence of socio-economic issues within the communities surrounding the participating schools. These issues include poverty, lack of parental support, decline of moral and value systems, extreme violence and gangsterism, unemployment and substance and alcohol abuse.

In the context of this study, the participants reported that all the above factors hampered effective teaching and learning processes, as the morals and values that the learners in this study were exposed to, directly influenced their daily existence and created a negative self-esteem and poor social interaction. The participants added that learning did not seem to be priority; the learners were embroiled in a fight for survival. Serious socio-economic issues were prevalent in the communities surrounding these schools.

As confirmation of the above mentioned, extrinsic barriers are conditions outside the learner (person). For learners attending school, extrinsic barriers can be caused by the societies in which they live or by the school system. Socio-economic barriers include aspects such as severe poverty, the family as a system, abuse, crime, violence in the neighbourhood and at home, gangster activities, lack of basic amenities, such as water, electricity, proper housing and toilets, gender issues in

cultural groups and society, and a home language that differs from the language of learning and teaching (Nel *et al.*, 2013:15; DoE, 2001:17-18).

Landsberg (2005:28) emphasises the above, stating that the result is a negative academic self-concept, relatively low levels of drive and accumulated scholastic backlog, diffused personality structure, an unmet need for expression, creativity that is alien to the school situation, social awkwardness and discomfort in the school situation.

On evaluating the responses to the question, all the participants agreed that socio-economic issues had a significant influence on the education of the learners with whom they interact on a daily basis. The following statements were expressed with:

P1: *"We've got foetal alcohol syndrome … children haven't been assessed, because of poverty-stricken homes. They lack resources, and they lack parental support. Their parents are illiterate, the parents are unable, and they latch their children. When they go home, there is nobody there."*

P2: *"I think the socio-economic group and the children; the kind of child that we work with, is a different child. These children are extremely aggressive and playful and never-minded. And then gangsterism here and everything that they exposed to in the community also plays a role in their actions at school."*

P4: *"It is sad to say that we have these socio-economic problems that also impact on the classroom, because many problems that we have relate to family life …. gangsterism is rife in our areas, drug abuse and all those social evils are prevalent at the moment in our society ..."*

P5: *"Definitely parental involvement. It's number one on my list, because I call in the parents and I offer them advice on how they can assist their learner at home, but I never seem to get the feedback from them":*

P6: "*Socio-economic problems. You get some of the things that the children say here at school; you get the feeling that there are deep-rooted problems at home. But more than that, you do not get cooperation from the side of the parents. It's like parents take their children and dump them at school.*"

P8: *"The emotional problems when children come from backgrounds where their, either parents going through a divorce, separated single parents. They come to school with no lunch and you can see by the way they are dressed to school, there is no care."* After probing regarding parental involvement, Participant 8 responded: *"Very poor, very poor".*

The DBE (2010:15) made it clear that many barriers existed as a result of socio-economic issues and that these could be overcome by, amongst others, sympathetic approaches by teachers; enrichment programmes involving hands-on experiences and the handling of concrete objects; calling DBSTs to assist in matters of abuse and other learner related issues; use of accelerated academic bridging programmes and baseline assessments to establish learners' current academic levels and facilitate placement in the appropriate grade and/or set of learning programmes (DBE, 2010:15).

Navsaria, Pascoe and Kathard (2011:44) contend that the lack of support described is linked to the fact that many learners come from extreme poverty and are disadvantaged in terms of their socio-economic background. Furthermore, many of the learners come from homes with single parents in whom there is often alcohol and drug abuse, violence and crime in and around the house.

A study conducted by Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011:209), found that many social ills, for example, drug/alcohol abuse, crime, HIV/AIDS and negative values, such as dishonesty, were prevalent among children. However, the interviews with the learners indicated that they did not see their (immoral) behaviour as unacceptable, wrong, or out of the ordinary. They saw their own behaviour, as well as the immoral behaviour of adults, as characteristic of the modern age.

Digman and Soan (2008), as referenced in Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:5), affirm that children who are negatively influenced by their home environments struggle to meet academic demands and manage their relationships with others. Pillay (2004), also referenced in Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:5), points out that physical constraints, such as overcrowded homes, and a lack of water, electricity and finances, may cause learners to underperform at school.

I understand the above findings to mean that social ills contribute negatively towards the process of learning. This is indicative of what the researcher in this study observed from the views of the participants. As a teacher, I can confirm that it happens to be a common phenomenon that impacts negatively on learning and teaching.

Based on the socio-economic problems, the following contributing factors will now be discussed:

4.5.2.1 Poverty

Dieltiens and Meny-Gilbert (2009:48) contend that absolute poverty may prolong a child's journey through school, as a result of repetition. Furthermore, children living in absolute poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to failure.

The findings of a study on *teaching and learning methods in inclusive classrooms in the foundation phase* by Matitswe (2012:109) confirm that poverty contributes towards barriers to learning, as most learners come from extended families, with many depending on their grandparents' pension grants. Some are orphans who are not well cared for.

With reference to both these studies, I agree that learners who stem from poor households where lighting, nutrition, resources and more are not accessible for them to do their schoolwork or study properly, would be more prone to frustration and

failure. A learner who is not fed properly, struggles with concentration in class and does not participate during class time.

4.5.2.2   Lack of parental support

Lack of parental support is one of the daunting tasks we face on a daily basis; many parents seem to have abdicated their responsibility to nurture their children. The concept of *in loco parentis* is definitely exercised; your role as a teacher is no longer limited to teaching, but inculcates social issues more than anything else.

According to the DBE (2010:14), parents are not always adequately informed of their children's problems or progress and are therefore often deprived of the opportunity to participate in their children's development. Also, parents who unable to understand their children's emotional and/or behavioural problems may in some cases aggravate their children's barriers.

Vogel (2011:27) is of the opinion that parents play a significant role in the education of their children; they can help teachers to understand their children better; they can give advice about individual behaviour; they can contribute to the design and implementation of joint learning support strategies; and they can help with homework, such as learning exercises and other activities.

The following extracts place emphasis on parental involvement.

P4: *"… many of our parents, unfortunately, they are also caught up with these loan sharks and sometimes these gangsters, because they have money, they lure the parents in and then they get to the learners, also. So these things impact on us at school, because now the parents have a non-caring attitude. So, they won't send the learners to school regularly."*

P1: *"… they lack resources and parental support. Their parents are illiterate, the parents are unable, they latch their children."*

P6: …. *"You do not get cooperation from the side of the parents. It's like parents take their children and dump them at school."*

After probing the participant (P8) in terms of parental involvement, she responded: …. *"Very poor, very poor. We send them numerous letters asking them to please come to school to deal with their children's academic work. They don't come at all."*

According to P2, in terms of challenges that she encountered: *"Lack of parental support is definitely one of them, you know, there's no parent involvement; there's no parental stimulation."*

P5: Upon probing this participant on her challenges, her response was: *"Definitely parental involvement. It's Number One on my list, because I'd call in the parents and I offer them advice on how they can assist their learner at home, but I never seem to get the feedback from them.*

The participating teachers were unanimous in their response that lack of parental involvement was a major challenge. Many teachers were of the opinion that parents were not assisting their children with homework and were not involved in their children's' school (involvement in schools refers to the attendance of teacher/parent meetings or other school functions).

It is evident from a study conducted by Sedibe (2012:158) that there is a lack of parental involvement in the teaching and learning of their children at school. The study further concludes that this lack of parental involvement will contribute to a lack of successful academic achievement of their children.

These findings are confirmed by Motitswe (2012:108), who also indicates that parents are not interested in their children's education, especially those whose children experience barriers to learning, and therefore do not want to be involved in the teaching and learning process, causing a barrier to educators in terms of finalising the intervention process.

The same concerns are revealed in a study conducted by Geldenhuys and Wevers, (2013:11) in which participants indicated that many parents did not involve themselves in the education and development of their children, leaving this up to the school. The participants further stated that the lack of support from parents placed much strain on educators which, in turn, hampered the implementation of inclusive education.

All the studies mentioned above, found that the lack of parental involvement in schools was a common problem. Parents have shifted their responsibilities upon teachers and the school. Many parents, as stated by Participant 8 (*don't want to be told that your child needs help, your child is not doing well academically, somehow, I don't know if it's a normal thing, if it's normal behaviour for parents to try and not want to hear that there is something wrong with the child"*) are in denial with regard to their children's barriers to learning and many refuse to cooperate with the school in aid of the learner. Learners are suffering the consequences of irresponsible parents.

It is made clear in the SASA (The South African Schools Act, 1996) that parents are equal partners in education, while the DBE (2010:15) states that parents have a key role in the screening, identification, assessment and support of their children for effective decision-making regarding the nature and extent of the support their children require.

4.5.2.3   Decline of moral and value systems

Due to the socio-economic circumstances it seems as though morals and values are degenerating. The study revealed that in the classroom learners did not show respect for each other's property and demonstrated little gratitude or appreciation towards one another. The participants also mentioned that moral values needed to be established and inculcated at home. Learners were being exposed to different situations in their home environment, and parents failed to discipline their children. It is of great importance that values be instilled in learners by the relevant stakeholders such as parents, teachers and the church. The learners did not attend church, where

morals and values could be inculcated. Even though some parents made an effort to discipline their children, the tactics that they employed, were not always effective. Furthermore, the participants mentioned that the children who were not taught were the difference between right and wrong would not know when their actions were wrong.

Landsberg (2005:449) holds that "Safe and secure family circumstances that inculcate values and serve as role models for children are fast disappearing".

For Louw (2009:187), everyone in society has a duty to prevent and minimise moral decay. Other institutions, departments and the Government should contribute towards positive change. If everyone prioritised positive values, it might be possible to achieve a crime-free and drug-free society.

Participant 2 made reference to the behaviour demonstrated by learners, stating, *"These children are extremely aggressive and playful and never-minded. And then gangsterism here and everything that they are exposed to in the community also plays a role in their action at school."*

P4: *"I believe if the class is happy, even more the learners will learn, but learning cannot take place in an ill-disciplined class. So, discipline is of utmost importance, but you must create an atmosphere which is conducive for learning."*

P1: *"Let's just stop shouting at you, cause it's not going to work. Now he is just, basically he wants to tell you ten things, and then you get irritated with him because why you're back-chatting."*

A study conducted by Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011:209) on the moral crisis in South African schools, confirms that many children do not have a proper value system, because they lack positive moral guidance from adults, in particular from parents and teachers.

In this regard, Prof. Kader Asmal, then Minister of Education, stated: *"Values cannot simply be asserted; they must be put on the table, be debated, be negotiated, be synthesised, be modified, be earned … this process, this dialogue, is in and of itself a value – a South African value – to be cherished. … If we are to live our Constitution and our Bill of Rights in our every-day life rather than just hear it interpreted for us, we have to distil out of it a set of values that are a comprehensible and meaningful to Grade Ones and Grade Twos as they are to be elders of the Constitutional Court"* (DoE, 2000:1).

4.5.2.4   Extreme violence and gangsterism

In the environment surrounding the participating schools, gangster activities seemed to be an option, especially when learners drop out of school, due to the fact that many families were supported financially by gang members. Violent activities were at the order of the day and had become the norm in society, as underprivileged learners experienced and viewed such activities on a daily basis, hence showing no emotion on witnessing violent behaviour or activities.

Joseph (2008:33) emphasises that gang activities are highly prevalent in lower income neighbourhoods and ethnic ghettos, where underprivileged children are often recruited. Economic hardship often befalls families with children under the age of 18 years. Poverty-stricken adolescents commonly resort to gangs, because gangs can give youth a sense of control and a way to make money. Youth craving role models can seek this out in a gang.

P4 elaborated, saying that: *"Where we find ourselves in the Northern Areas, we know that we are currently in the hands of gangsters. Gangsterism is rife in our areas."*

P2: *… and then, gangsterism here, and everything that they're exposed to in the community, also plays a role in their actions at school."*

Bester and Du Plessis (2010:25) state that violence at school is experienced as a harsh reality that affects the functioning of an educator on many levels. They identify various causes of violence at school, intimating those factors such as academic tension, retaliation against intimidation and bullying, no repercussions for undesirable behaviour and violence, gangster-related activities, violence in society, prejudiced behaviour, alcohol and gambling were the root causes of violence in schools.

The findings in a study conducted by Bayat, Louw and Rena (2014:12) revealed that when the participating learners were asked why they felt unsafe, most cited the high crime rate in their area, specifying violent crimes, theft, robbery and gangsterism. Some learners also referred to a pervasive lack of (or dysfunctional) infrastructure in townships; for example, street lights that were not working, as well as fragile and insecure housing structures as key reasons why they felt unsafe and vulnerable.

This situation is also prevalent in the researcher's own school environment where learners, even at primary school level, are exposed to gang violence and violent crimes in the community. Ultimately, these very learners get caught up in a vicious cycle, as children tend to model what they see.

4.5.2.5 Unemployment

Unemployment was another huge problem in the areas surrounding the school. Due to illiteracy, early exits from school and substance abuse, most of the adults in the community were dependent on social grants. Most of them had not acquired the necessary skills or knowledge to be employed.

Social obstacles that adolescents may encounter on their way to adulthood in the 21st century have been highlighted by different authors. These include global poverty, inadequate and irrelevant provision of education, increasing unemployment rates, political apathy regarding the youth's welfare and future, and insufficient provision to equip people with interethnic communication skills in a globalised age (Steyn, Badenhorst and Kamper, 2010:173).

Furthermore, Kamper (2001:11) reports the distressing fact that 40% of South Africa's population find themselves in acute poverty conditions, so much so that they are living below the so-called poverty line.

Participant 8 mentioned in the interview: "… *as you talk to them, you'll realise now something has happened: this morning, didn't have breakfast; didn't have a meal the night before; mother lost her job …*"

A study conducted by Du Toit (2003:20) has concluded that youth unemployment in South Africa is a serious cause for concern. Most of them have no prospect of a decent work-life that would enable them to earn an income, choose working activities that they would like to do, and be integrated into a socio-economic system with the stated aim to benefit the majority of the nation.

Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:5), argue that owing to parents' generally low educational level, they struggle to find permanent employment, and therefore experience varying levels of poverty. Learners that grow up in such home environments will be more inclined to be at risk for poor academic performance.

The first study by Du Toit (2003:20*)* on *unemployed Youth in South Africa* concluded that it is imperative that learners, especially learners with barriers, be educated in a skill of their choice, to be able to sustain themselves after exiting school. Due to the fact that many learners grow up in poor homes, with illiterate and unemployed parents being educated in a particular skill is very important, in the sense that such a learner will then be an aid to his or her household as well.

4.5.2.6   Substance and alcohol abuse

Young people who abuse substances often experience an array of problems including academic difficulties, health-related problems, mental problems like depression, and poor peer relationships. "*Family relationships are also affected.*

Substance abuse by youths often results in family crises and can jeopardise many aspects of family life" (Jordan, 2013:1).

In this regard, Participant 4 commented:

"Drug abuse and all those social evils are prevalent at the moment in our society …"

Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011:207) indicate that some parents and teachers, on becoming aware of learners' use of drugs/alcohol, sometimes try to dissuade the learners from using these substances. What also emerged from the interviews these researchers held with learners was the fact that some teachers were not positive role models for learners. Learners indicated during the interviews that some teachers socialised and use alcohol with them (learners).

On the other hand, Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:5) found in their investigation that many learners were neglected at home because of parents' drug and alcohol abuse. The study also established that learners from such households were in many cases forced to take care of the household and look after themselves. This burden of extra responsibility at home impacted negatively on these learners' ability to respond positively to teaching and learning opportunities at school, which in turn impeded the management of these learners in mainstream schools.

It is evident from both studies that due to poor morals and values that are entrenched in the learners, they would venture into substance and alcohol abuse. Where learners are exposed to these bad habits, they would want to experiment, too, especially when pressurised by their peers. Parents in turn seem to be irresponsible by using substances and alcohol in front of their children – not ideally how one would want to rear one's children.

4.5.2.7   Language of learning and teaching

Following the influx of isiXhosa (one of the South African languages) speaking learners from the townships to Northern Areas schools, many challenges have

arose. This is largely due to the different language of instruction at the participating schools and these learners' home language. Therefore, problems arise, especially when these learners start school in the Intermediate Phase.

In this regard, Nel *et al.* (2013:31) conclude their extended overview of language by stating that teachers must be aware that many learners experience barriers to learning because they do not learn in their mother tongue or have specific speech and language difficulties, which could hamper their cognitive development.

According to the DoE (2005:67) there is no single classroom in which all learners are exactly the same, or learn in the same way; or at the same pace.

Vogel (2011:15) contends that learners' cultural background and language, as well as the school and environment in which they find themselves, must be taken into account. Learning support must be tailored to suit learners' particular problems, learning styles and strong modalities.

On this question, the participants in this study responded as follows:

P2: *"the other thing is at our school particularly, we have, it's a dual medium school; we have two Afrikaans classes and one English class per grade, but many of the parents put their children in an English class, knowing that the child is actually Afrikaans-speaking at home ... and then they don't understand what you're speaking about so you're got to go back and first speak in Afrikaans, and a few of them are also Xhosa-speaking children."*

P3: *"The area where I teach, is predominantly Afrikaans; then we have a lot of Xhosa-speaking children, they come into the school at Grade 4 level, which means for the Foundation Phase they were taught in their mother tongue, now this poor child is struggling now with, not only English but now there's a third language for them, which is our additional language, which is Afrikaans."*

P8: *"We don't have a problem if the child has been at our school from pre-school. But once they come for the first time, for example, now to the Grade 4's, and they come from the Xhosa medium school or from Pakistani, then their children don't speak English."*

A study conducted by Lumadi (2013:116) contends that a relevant curriculum that meets the needs of LSEN must be developed according to the specific character of the school, by the whole staff.

In addition to the above, Navsaria *et al.* (2011:42) emphasise the fact that School Governing Bodies (SGBs) decide on the LOLT. Although there have been changes in learner profiles and schools are now linguistically diverse, many schools still choose to have English as the LOLT and, in the case of this study, the teachers used Afrikaans.

The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) gives learners the choice of the LOLT (DoE, 1997). Learners in ordinary schools in South Africa have the right to choose any of the eleven official languages as the LOLT and as a learning area from Grade 3 onwards (DoE, 1997). Hence, learners may be taught in their mother tongue up to Grade 3, and then have the option of extending the use of their home language into the Intermediate Phase (DoE, 1997). However, to make it practical, the LiEP makes provision for the consideration of learner numbers when making the choice of the LoLT (Navsaria *et al.*, 2011:42).

Motitswe (2012:102) recommends that the decision on LOLT should be based on the language that is predominantly used in the community. The School Governing Body (SGB) and School Management Team (SMT) should be guided by the language policy in decisions on the LOLT.

With reference to the above studies, it would be fair to agree that teaching and learning should be consistent in terms of the learners' home language. In all the studies mentioned, it was made clear that the home language of learners should be first choice for teaching and learning.

The Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning (DBE, 2010:14) state that upon a learner's enrolment in a school where the language of learning and teaching is not his/her home language, school management and teachers of all learning areas and or programmes should ensure that support and supplementary learning in the language of learning and teaching is provided until such time that learners are able to learn effectively through the schools' medium of choice.

Learners whose home language is not the school's language of learning and teaching should receive particular attention and support (DBE, 2010:14).

4.5.3 Curriculum Differentiation

Westwood (2007:200) states that it is intended that the curriculum be differentiated in terms of its subject matter, teaching methods, activities and assessment procedures, to suit the diverse learning characteristics of children.

However, Pasensie (2012:2) mentions that one of the biggest challenges in the implementation of a successful inclusive education system is ensuring that teachers have an understanding of "how to identify and address barriers to learning through differentiating the curriculum, assessment and classroom methodologies so as to address the diverse learning and teaching requirements of all learners".

Most participants felt that the curriculum forms a big part of the challenges that they experience on a daily basis.

P5: *"I think the curriculum also, that is loaded and doesn't make provision also for learners who have those disabilities. They mention it and in documents, you read of tips, suggestions to follow for learners who present the barriers, but when you need to put it into practice in the situation we are in, it does not work for us here."*

P2: *"I don't have enough resources and the task, the CAPS curriculum is so heavy and it's so loaded. There is so much to do and complete so we mainly focus on*

getting the curriculum finished, and at the end of the day you forget that you've got to work on the quality of those things also, you know, that they're expecting you to cover."

P7: "*Special needs should be a priority; it should be part of your curriculum."*

With reference to the above statements, a differentiated curriculum offers a variety of ways for learners who differ in abilities, knowledge and skills to access a shared curriculum. Educators offer adaptations to what learners learn (content), how learners learn (process), and how learners demonstrate what they have learned (product) (DoE, 2010:22).

The current Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum is seen by teachers as "loaded" or "packed"; there is hardly time or space for quality teaching, because of the quantity of the workload. Consolidation of knowledge rarely happens. Learners with barriers to learning are expected to carry the same workload as their peers within mainstream settings. Irrespective of their capabilities, none to very few adaptations have been made to suit their learning needs.

Motitswe (2012:98) reveals that it is apparent that differentiation with regard to lesson planning, assessment standards and activities is carried out, thus assuring flexibility in teaching and learning, in the sense that learners' level of ability is accommodated.

According to EWP6 (DoE, 2001:20), the most important way of addressing barriers arising from the curriculum is to make sure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles. The curriculum must therefore be made more flexible across all bands of education so that it becomes accessible to all learners, irrespective of their learning needs.

The SIAS document (DBE, 2014:15) states that curriculum and assessment adjustments are required to allow learners at multiple levels of functioning to access

the curriculum and assessment tasks best suited to their needs. Such accommodations can be managed at school or classroom level.

With reference to the above statements, it is clear that the curriculum should be flexible in order to provide for learners' needs and that each learner who has been diagnosed with a learning barrier should be accommodated and supported.

4.6 THEME 4: TEACHERS' CAPABILITIES IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE CLASSROOMS

TABLE 4.1.4: Teacher's capabilities
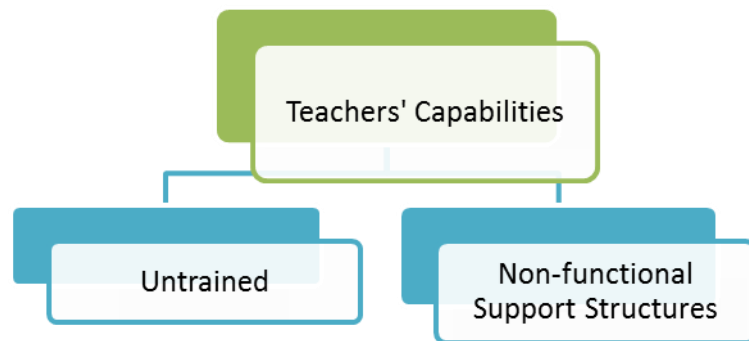
Theme four places emphasis on the capabilities of teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's within their respective classrooms in mainstream schools.

Engelbrecht *et al.* (2007:157) have alluded to the fact that many classroom teachers feel that they do not have sufficient training and support to meet many of the challenges presented by the learners in their classes and the general problems facing the school as a whole.

The following sub-themes will focus directly on the views of teachers pertaining to their skills and experiences in providing learning support.

4.6.1   Untrained teachers in learning support

On analysing the data collected from the participants who were interviewed, it was evident that the majority shared the same views and concerns regarding the lack of training amongst teachers in terms of providing learning support to those presenting barriers to learning.

P1 and P6 agree: *"Teachers are lacking skills as to how we should deal with them."*

P7: *"I don't think that all teachers are equipped to teach LSEN (an outdated concept which was used in South Africa to refer to learners with barriers to learning).*

P2: *"Some of our teachers are equipped with all these skills and they studied further in special needs education, but they don't have the time to sit with those learners, because they all have register classes."*

P5: *"Our schools don't have the capacity to deal with learners with any sort of learning disability."*

P4: *"Most of the teachers have not been exposed to a qualification to cater for those learners."*

Participants P6 and P7 emphasised on what many had already stated: *"There are trained teachers, but they are too few."*

Lamport, Graves and Ward (2012:65) conclude that for inclusion to be successful, it is important to provide educators with training, planning time with their co-teacher, and adequate resources to meet the needs of students. It is when teachers are fully prepared that the inclusion model will yield positive results.

On the other hand, EWP6 (DoE, 2001) states that classroom educators are the primary resource for achieving the goal of an inclusive education and training system. This means that educators will have to improve their skills and knowledge,

and develop new ones. Staff development at school and district level will be critical in implementing successful integrated educational practices. On-going assessment of educators' needs through or developmental appraisal, followed by structured programmes to meet these needs, will make a critical contribution.

A study conducted by Brady and Woolfson (2008:538) found that teachers with more than 15 years' experience viewed children's difficulties as more internally attributable than those with less than 15 years of experience. It was further established that enthusiasm for inclusion increased with distance from regular classroom practice; it could be that teacher educators and trainers' enthusiasm about the effects teachers could have on learners with difficulties had been transmitted to, and retained by, the more recently trained teachers.

Lumadi (2013:116) contends that the training teachers received in inclusion is haphazard and that no follow-ups are made. Although some teachers are highly qualified, they should be empowered with skills that will enable them to face the challenges with ease.

Donohue and Bornman (2014:2) state that to successfully implement inclusion anywhere in the world, educators must have adequate training, sufficient support, and positive attitudes. In addition, Frankel, Gold and Ajodhia-Andrews (2010), as referenced in Donohue and Bornman (2014:2), are of the opinion that to successfully implement inclusion anywhere in the world, educators must have adequate training, sufficient support and a positive attitude.

My view on the above statements is that their negative attitude towards inclusion can be ascribed to the fact that many teachers have not been trained at all. Particularly, teachers are not familiar with group work in order to educate learners on their different levels. Workshops are not sufficient to deal with a phenomenon such as inclusive education and dealing with learners who experience barriers to learning.

Therefore, based on the above, the EWP6 (DoE, 2001:17-18) confirms that different learning needs may also arise because of inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators.

4.6.2 Non-functional support structures

Support structures especially SBSTs and DBSTs at most of the schools I visited seemed not to have fully functional support systems in place to support teachers teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities. The following concerns were expressed by the participants who participated in this study. All of them raised concerns regarding their support structures within the bounds of the school context.

Vogel (2011:4) is emphatic that the SBSTs first priority is to assist the teacher and not the learner. If, with the help of the support team, the teacher does not succeed in helping the learner, the next step is for a team member to assist the learner.

The following responses confirmed the general lack of support from the parat of the SBST and DBST at the participating schools:

P1: *"We have no intervention programmes at our school."*

P8: "*Absolutely nothing.*"

P2: "*Intervention, we don't have the manpower at school.*"

P5: "*We don't have a formal intervention programme.*"

P3: *"It is difficult with the big classes that we have …"*

P4: *"There are no structures in place."*

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010:179) contend as follows: "An in-depth and on-going professional training for all stakeholders is needed if the country is serious about

making education systems inclusive and deepening an understanding of inclusive education and exclusive practices. In-service training, which has become the means by which professionals are trained and retrained, should be intensified and on-going to enable educators to acquire as much knowledge and skills possible."

As mentioned by Donald *et al.* (2010:302), most children with MID's are either in mainstream education (with their difficulties unrecognised) or have dropped out from school through repeated failure and lack of help. It is also apparent that these schools never had any resources to call on when teachers needed advice or support. The frustrations that teachers experience despite the contradictions prevalent in EWP6 can be linked to their inability to help these learners due to a lack of skills and training and support forthcoming from the Department of Education.

Nel, Muller and Rheeders (2011) as referenced in Donohue and Bornman (2008:4), state that recent research involving school principals in Gauteng, the richest and best resourced province in South Africa, has revealed that most learner with disabilities receive specialised support services either "seldom "or "never".

Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit and Van Deventer (2015:10) state that teachers have pointed out that they have not yet received the promised support with regard to training in the implementation of inclusive education, learning support material and adaptive equipment from the Provincial Department of Education, as well as from the Local Departmental District Office as formulated in the DBST guidelines published in 2005 (DoE, 2005).

The editor of a local (Port Elizabeth) newspaper, *The Herald* (20 January 2016:11), has commented on the closure of schools in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth, due to closure lack of Departmental support. The Northern Areas Education Forum (NAEF) describes the Eastern Cape Education Department as the weakest in the country*. "If the chaos in the Eastern Cape Department of Education is hurting pupils in our city's Northern Areas, spare a thought for the children with special needs in those classrooms, because they are doubly disadvantaged."* The Parents in the

NAEF added a desperate plea for special needs children be given the intervention they need (*The Herald*, 2016:11).

Taking into account the above editorial comment, it is clear that rapid movement needs to take place from the side of the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape, as the Department of Education is failing both learners and teachers, especially learners presenting with barriers to learning.

4.7 THEME 5: TEACHERS' ATTITUDES IN TEACHING LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

TABLE 4.1.5: Teachers' attitudes in teaching learners with mild intellectual disabilities
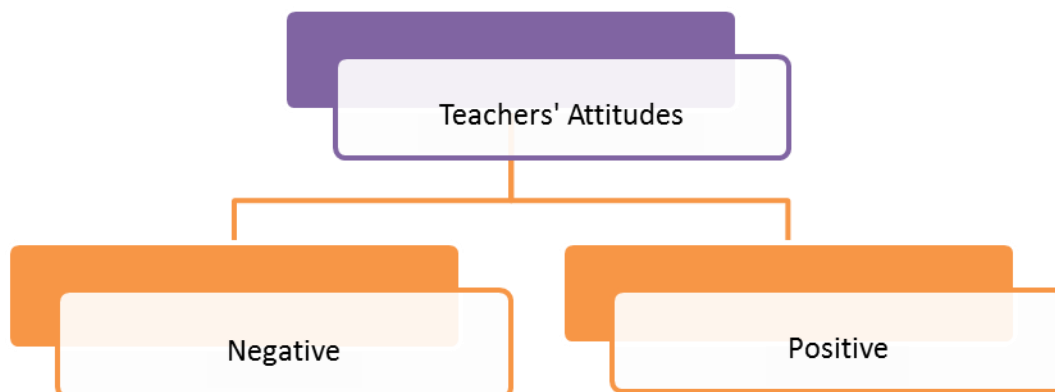
This question was posed to the participants to find out how they experienced the provision of learning support for learners with MID's in the mainstream classroom. The majority of participants (6 out of 8) gave a negative response while 2 participants responded positively.

Engelbrecht *et al*. (2007:71) point out that teachers are human beings with individual attitudes to difference and disabilities, formed in a context of prevailing social attitudes. Many may initially resist the notion of inclusion. Furthermore, it is mentioned that teachers with little experience of people with disabilities are likely to have negative attitudes to inclusion.

The provision of learning support for learners with MID's is experienced by teachers as a difficult task. The study elicited both negative and positive responses from participants. The responses were as follows:

P1: "Very hard! *Why hard? Because I'm teaching Grade 5 mainstream normal school. We don't have any specialised classrooms. It's very difficult, very frustrating, it's almost impossible. To get to them, is very difficult … you're trying to get to them, but it's hard, it's very difficult and it gets very frustrating."*

P2: *'It's a daunting task'; a lot is expected from the teacher … so it's daunting, and it's tiring, because, and it's taxing on you as a person …"*

P5: *'Frustrating, extremely frustrating ... and for a lack of a better word, I think it is really unfair on that particular learner. I find that I don't have the time to do justice to that type of learner … and that learner gets drowned in the other … because of the other learners in the class."*

P6: *It's difficult, very difficult. It's most of us haven't trained with the children we're dealing with, so it's very difficult … it's not very easy to deal with them. I just feel that we have just been thrown in the deep end and that there is no support whatsoever …"*

P7: *"I find it to be very challenging at times yet also very informative."*

P8: "I find it v*ery rewarding."*

P1: "*Unfortunate that these learners are treated in the same way as learners in the mainstream classes."*

Lumadi (2013:111) states that researchers believe that the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning from special schools into the mainstream is likely to be met with mixed reactions from teachers, emanating from varying attitudes towards the implementation process.

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For Westwood (2007:17) teachers' doubts and negative attitudes could be attributed in part to their limited knowledge of disabilities and their lack of first-hand experience working with atypical children. This affirms the views of participants highlighted above.

A study conducted by Mavuso (2015:182) pointed to contradictory experiences among teachers on providing learning support for learners presenting with specific learning difficulties in the senior phase. Reflected in this study, is that teachers who were positive about supporting such learners were those with more teaching experience. On the other hand, teachers with less teaching experience found supporting such learners a daunting task, and displayed a lack of commitment.

Brady and Woolfson (2008:528) contend that it may be teacher training rather than experience *per se* that exerts a positive impact on teachers' beliefs about teaching learners with special needs in mainstream.

In their study, Brady and Woolfson (2008:528) established that general mainstream teachers held the most negative attitudes towards inclusion. The scholars mentioned that negative attitudes are cause for concern, as negative attitudes towards children with disabilities are likely to have a harmful impact on the outcome of inclusive educational practices.

On the other hand, Lumadi's (2013:122) results indicate that teachers support inclusive education, though they would like certain things to change before it is implemented, such as over-crowded classrooms, infrastructure and other aspects that may pose impediments to the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers also think that they need appropriate training so as to be empowered for the task ahead.

One can deduce from the studies above that teachers feel largely demoralised in that they are not fully equipped to assist these learners from an academic perspective. It is also apparent that a positive attitude from the teacher may influence positive results from the learners. It could be said that if teachers are provided with

the necessary training and support structures needed to support learners with barriers to learning, it may evoke a positive attitude towards teaching and learning processes where these learners are concerned.

The DBE (2010:17) states that discriminatory attitudes flowing from prejudice against people on the basis of race, class, gender, culture, disability, religion, ability, sexual preference and/or other characteristics manifest themselves as barriers to learning when such attitudes are directed towards learners in the education system.

4.8 THEME 6: OPINIONS ON HOW LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES SHOULD BE SUPPORTED

TABLE 4.1.6: Opinions on how learners with mild intellectual disabilities should be supported
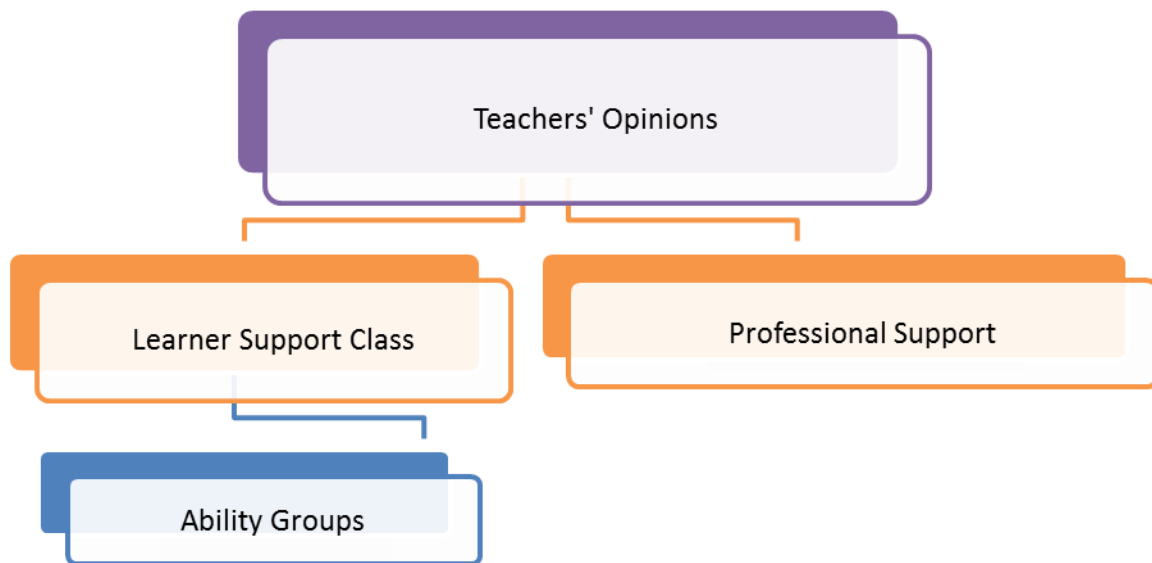
This theme will present the views shared by teachers on how to support learners with mild intellectual disabilities within the context of their respective classes, as mentioned by the late Minister Kadar Asmal in EPW6, where he cited the concerns raised by teachers, parents and other stakeholders regarding the kind of educational experience that would be able to assist learners with intellectual disabilities (DoE, 2001:3).

4.8.1   Learner support classrooms

Based on the above, as mentioned in Theme 4, support for learners should start with a learner support class and a trained learner support teacher who has the skills and knowledge to support these learners.

Donald *et al.* (2010:302) assert that with a large number of children with learning needs, a system of learning support classes might be part of the answer. In reality, is it likely that these will serve the more intense needs of children at the lower range of MID?

Most participants in this study were of the opinion that these learners should be separated from mainstream classes. The following views were shared:

P1: *"Specialised classrooms for special children."*

P2: *"I don't think that they should be in a mainstream class. I think they should be separated, because they kind of keep the mainstream children, they keep them back, and they also deter from their path, because they're not keeping up with the children that are actually mainstream."*

P3: *"I think for a child to progress, you need to put the children who are on the same level in one class and work with that child according to the child's ability and the level that the child is on and take into consideration how much that child can really absorb and not forcing the child, the whole curriculum, on the child …"*

P5: *"I think they should be separated from the other learners. I mean separated is such an ugly word to use, but you know that they get really, like we had our "aanpassingsklasse" in the olden days. You know, they're still in a mainstream school, but they have their own special classroom with fewer kids that the teacher can cope with and give attention that the child needs."*

P6: *"I feel that they should have, they should be a grouping on their own where they are going to be attended to by somebody who is trained to deal with them. Because I feel we are doing a big disservice to them."*

P4: *"Inclusive education has been brought in, in order to have learners with mild disabilities to be in mainstream schools. But they are doing an injustice to the learners."*

P8: *"There should be a remedial class; there should definitely be a remedial class."*

In Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:3) it is stated that given the considerable expertise and resources that are in invested in special schools, we must also make these available to neighbourhood schools, especially full service schools and colleges. This can be achieved by making special schools, in an incremental manner, part of district support services where they can become resources for all our schools. It is further stated in the said document that special schools will be strengthened rather than abolished.

In their single case-study, Pillay and Terlizzi (2009:506-50) established that, even though inclusive education was being promoted, a learner taken from a mainstream class and placed in a learner support class showed better progress. It should be noted that their study was not focused on the reintegration of learners into mainstream environments following LSEN intervention, but rather the lessons to be learnt from LSEN environments to inform mainstream learner support and to promote the success of inclusion.

In a case study by Engelbrecht, *et al.* (2015:11), learners with disabilities as well as learning difficulties were referred, provided with an LSEN number and then placed in a separate classroom. The teachers attempted to provide what they believed was the best possible learning environment for learners experiencing barriers to learning, by placing them in a separate classroom with teachers who had some training and experience in teaching these learners.

In the same study, the researchers fully acknowledged that no education practice was easy to change and that developing inclusive school environments was a complex process, with wide-ranging financial and human resources implications and constraints. Engelbrecht *et al.* (2015:11) agree with Donohue and Bornman (2014) that the National Department of Education needs to hold itself accountable for the idealistic policy that it created in 2001, if the policy is not to remain purely symbolic. They furthermore mention that going beyond the statement of rights involves further support for implementation, including clear directives for appropriate responsibility and control of implementation.

Ford (2013:14) feels that in some situations it may be best for students with learning disabilities to be taught in separate pull-out classrooms with a teacher who can provide targeted skills instruction in areas where the students are struggling.

In contrast, EWP6 (DoE, 2001) and the guideline document (DBE, 2010) affirm that full-service schools need to be developed into beacons of the evolving inclusive education system in South Africa by becoming models of good inclusive practices. These schools should therefore be inclusive in the broadest sense of the word, providing quality education to the full range of learning needs. This includes that learners with disabilities may not be excluded from mainstream education classrooms and should be provided with opportunity to fully participate in everyday activities in mainstream classrooms (DBE, 2010); Engelbrecht *et al.,* 2015:11).

It is true that some learners do need special attention outside of the mainstream class. It is sometimes impossible for teachers to provide quality education for learners with barriers in overcrowded classrooms, as learners in a mainstream classroom setting also have their weaker groups. This means that the class teacher already has weaker mainstream learners to support and therefore it is really an almost impossible task to also take care of learners with barriers in the same class. Many learners who suffer with barriers to learning are then looked over and just remain in such a classroom without the proper teaching strategies. This results in learners being passed on to the next grade without the proper knowledge or support, and they continue to lag behind throughout their schooling career. In the end, this

backlog becomes so huge that it is impossible to address and learners, being frustrated, drop out of school.

As stated earlier, Donohue and Bornman (2014:7) argue that South Africa's inclusive education policy is characterised by both high conflict and ambiguity, meaning that these policies are referred to as symbolic implementation policies. The latter tend to garner attention when they are first passed, but ultimately do not come to light; this same pattern is observed in the implementation of the inclusion policy.

4.8.2   Professional Support

With reference to professional support, these support services should be fully utilised in rendering support to teachers teaching learners with barriers to learning in an inclusive setting. A major concern is the fact that due to the lack of knowledge and skills from a teaching perspective, teachers are in need of professional support from the Department of Education, more specifically focusing on assistance from District-based Support Teams. The DBSTs should then be responsible for establishing ILSTs at local schools. This should be the starting point for in-service training of teachers on how to provide learning support for learners with MID's.

According to EPW6 (DoE, 2001:29), the primary function of the Institutional Level Support Team will be to put in place properly co-ordinated learner and educator support services. These services will support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs.

Furthermore, it is stated that where appropriate, these teams should be strengthened by drawing on the expertise available in the local community, district support teams and higher education institutions. District-based support teams will provide the full range of education support services, such as professional development in the curriculum and assessment to these institutional-level support teams (DoE, 2001:29).

The following responses were received from the participants during the interview process, on questioning them about the learner support services available at their respective schools.

P6: *"The Department is failing us as a society and should actually be doing a need analysis on a regular basis."*

P4: *"… but the Department must create a structure where they can assist teachers to be able to work more effectively with learners with mild learning disabilities."*

P5: *"Unless we can get the extra support that we need or professionals can come into school to assist us, I think our kids are really drawing the short end of the stick."*

P7: *"Teachers should come together in clusters to provide learning support structures in terms of the LSEN learners."*

P1: *"I would like for remedial teachers to enter into our school, whereby they would come, they would actually have the skills that are necessary to deal with these children."*

According to Pasensie (2012:3), the successful implementation of EWP6 is dependent on the establishment of DBSTs; however, most provinces do not have the necessary skills to draw on to establish these teams. A DBST should ideally comprise curriculum experts; inclusive education officials; a psychologist; therapists; social workers; learning support educators; School Governance Body and School Management Team members; infrastructure officials; and circuit managers. Provinces like the Eastern Cape and Limpopo are struggling to establish DBSTs because they do have the necessary skills to draw on (Pasensie, 2013:3).

Donohue and Bornman (2013:8) echo the sentiments of Pasensie (2012), stating that, currently, the implementation of an inclusive education policy is at an apparent standstill as a result of ambiguity about the means through which the goals of inclusive education can be achieved. Without funding and clear directives, provincial

departments do not possess the ability to make progress towards implementation. To make significant progress in this regard, the Department of Education can no longer relegate the responsibility for implementing a policy of its own design to others, such as school principals and teachers.

The SIAS Policy (DBE, 2014:7) indicates that support should focus only on the diagnosis and remediation of deficits in individual learners through individual attention by specialist staff. The SIAS shifts the focus to a holistic approach in terms of which a whole range of possible *barriers to learning* that the learners may *experience* (such as extrinsic barriers at home, at school or in the community environment, or barriers related to disabilities) are considered. The aim is to design support programmes in such a way that the learner will gain access to learning.

Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:4) agree that support is an essential component of successful inclusive education practices, as the needs of many learners with disabilities fall beyond the basic services available in typical general classrooms.

In my opinion, without these support structures, a teacher would be unable to provide sufficient and accurate support to these learners. It is extremely frustrating to find that there are no support structures in place at assisting schools. Another frustration stems from the fact that learners linger on waiting lists for two years or more before being assessed – not to mention placed in a special school, if needed, because there are not enough special schools to accommodate the large numbers of learners who would benefit from tuition at a special school.

Serious intervention needs to take place to ensure that teachers receive the support and assistance from the local Department of Education they need and that learners with barriers to learning benefit from these support measures.

4.8.3 Ability Grouping

Although South Africa supports the concept of inclusive education, participants reported a different view, insisting that learners should be grouped according to individual ability.

This view is shared by Prinsloo, in Landsberg (2005:457). The author states that learners may be grouped in classes according to their performance in a learning-area, i.e. ability grouping (based on, for example, their reading ability).

Pillay and Terlizzi (2009:506), agree, stating that, where possible, it may be appropriate to group learners according to their activities or work pace. Furthermore, stronger learners may be called upon to assist weaker learners. Similarly, co-operative learning strategies could be used, since they are likely to increase socialisation in groups where learners function on the same level.

The participants in this study responded to this sub-theme as follows:

P3: *"I think that for a child to progress, you need to put the children who are on the same level in one class and work with that child according to the child's ability and the level that the child is on and take into consideration how much that child can really absorb and not forcing the child, the whole curriculum, on the child ... uhm ... the child must know everything in the curriculum: rather see what the child can absorb and work with that."*

P4: *"Trying to make the lessons interesting by … to work on their level … in essence a teacher should try to remain on the nouvea of the learner, because if you cannot relate on their level, then they will in any case not be able to understand what you are doing."*

P1: *"I have tried to go back a level … the material that is supposed to be used by a child who is at Grade 6 level, they cannot comprehend that, so what I do is I deal with them on a much lower level."*

P6: *"I feel that they should be a grouping on their own, where they are going to be attended to by somebody who is trained to deal with them."*

P7: *"So it's very important to identify their learning needs and ensure that when you are setting up your syllabus, that it correlates with their level of understanding."*

Landsberg and Dedman (1999:24) as referenced in Landsberg (2005:76), concur with the participants, saying that learning support should commence on the level (Grade) in which the learner is. If the learner finds it difficult to understand or master the content, content from a lower level could be selected until the learner experiences success. The content should be contextualised to promote understanding.

A study conducted by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:14) revealed that the participating teachers rarely employed a variety of teaching techniques to accommodate the diverse learning styles of learners and to provide equal opportunities for all learners or used alternative modes of assessment.

In addition, Motitswe (2012:110) confirms the Department of Education (2005:67) statement that there is no single classroom in which all leaners are exactly the same, or learn in the same way or at the same pace; as a result, educators are required to be creative in using a variety of teaching methods to reach all the learners.

EWP6 (DoE, 2001:16) makes reference to the fact that learners at schools level should be given the opportunity to learn and progress at their own desired pace and these learners should be provided with support, where necessary.

I agree with the statement made by Landsberg (2005) that learners should be taught on their respective levels and not be thrown into the deep end by exposing them to information that they are not ready to absorb, especially if the previous knowledge has not yet been consolidated. This causes frustration among both teachers and learners. The fact that teachers are not employing a variety of strategies could be

due to their lack of training and support and the fact that they do not have the skills to deal with and/or identify barriers to learning,

Furthermore, the process of consolidation is imperative in the Foundation Phase as it sets the tone for the acquisition of knowledge. Only once learners mastered that which has been set for them to achieve, can they be promoted. If they are promoted without having mastered the basic skills, these learners will ultimately present a backlog in the next phase, which may serve as a stumbling block in terms of their ability to pass comprehensively. Therefore it will require that the learner be educated on a level lower than that required for that specific grade.

According to a final report (October 2009) presented to the Minister of Education, Angelina Motshekga, appropriate teachers should be given guidance and support in the CAPS documents on how to teach specific content/concepts and skills, particularly in areas of difficulty. Clarity on the appropriateness of certain methodologies, such as group-work, should also be provided (DBE, 2009c:63). Furthermore, the report states that separate special guideline documents for ELSEN and for multi-grade classes will be developed, aligned to the curriculum and assessment policy documents (DBE, 2009c:63).

The latter statement is in contradiction with what is currently apparent in the education structure, as it has not yet been efficiently implemented (2015).

4.9 DOCUMENTS ANALYSIS

In this study, documents in the form of learner workbooks and tests as well as the teachers' observations were used for analysis. Based on the viewing of these documents, comments are made from a researcher's perspective. The following table indicates the observations of both the participating teachers and the researcher:

4.9.1 Teacher' records

The following observations were recorded by teachers about the learners.

Learner A-Grade 6

The teacher reported that the learner in question was 14 years old and in Grade 6. He had a short attention span and worked below average. The learner repeated grades, but was promoted each year, due to age cohort. He did not cope with the work; was unable to grasp basic phonics, which meant he could not construct or read word; does not know blends, vowel diagraphs, and consonant diagraphs; he cannot read on his own or follow group reading.

This learner was also unable to finish any work in class, or to work in smaller groups. He had problems with writing and found it difficult to copy from the board. He had never passed any grade. He was quiet and well behaved.

The records indicate that the relevant teacher was able to identify learners with barriers to learning and could name such barriers. The teacher used concepts such as "the learners had a low attention span". The teacher also recorded that learners who failed a grade, were being promoted, due to age cohort.

Learner B-Grade 5

According to the teacher, this learner had been diagnosed as ADHD. While he had been on prescribed medication to control the condition, he lacked the responsibility to take his medication on time. He was struggling in all learning areas and did not function at the level he should. He was far below average compared to 'normal' Grade 5 learners. He had severe behavioural issues and lacked the ability to cope with the workload. Written work, copying, reading and spelling – all posed major challenges to him.

The information suggests that the teacher was aware of the condition of the learner as she seemed to be able to record relevant observations about the learner.

Learner C-Grade 3

The teacher revealed that the learner struggled with single sounds and blends. Language barriers were evident in English, because the learner's home language was Afrikaans. This learner hardly ever completed work and struggled to follow through on instructions.

This observation confirms what emerged in the interview (Please see Theme 3, Section 4.5.3). The teacher also reported that the learner did not follow instructions, due to his inability to read questions and comprehend the information he was supposed to respond to. He confused basic sounds and blends, omitted letters in words, and had a problem with letter-sound formation.

Learner D-Grade 7

This teacher noticed that due to the learner's inability to identify basic sounds, build words or construct meaningful sentences, he consistently underachieved in most subjects. The teacher also recorded that the learner could not write creatively: nothing made sense. His language development was very poor. He seldom completed tasks. He relied heavily on his peers for assistance, and liked to copy. He enjoyed school and attended regularly.

The learner's written work revealed that the learner was not familiar with basic sight words; his general sight vocabulary was poor. This learner's sentence construction was extremely poor, in the sense that nothing made sense – not even one word. Copying from another source was also poor and the learner committed many errors. It was also clear that this learner could not read, resulting in poor writing skills. He might be able to copy, but he could not use written symbols for purposeful communication. He omitted syllables within words, because he did not distinguish all the parts within the whole word.

This confirms what emerged in Theme 1, Section 4.3.1.

Learner E-Grade 7

According to the teacher's notes and records from the support forms, the low scores obtained by the learner could have been influenced by her inability to remember basic concepts. She had poor understanding of English as first language, as isiXhosa was her mother tongue. She struggled to follow instructions, due to poor understanding; she could not find the correct answers to questions, simply taking anything out of a passage to fill in answers.

As emerged in Theme 3, Section 4.5.3, the language barrier was a big problem. The learner was isiXhosa speaking, and spoke English only at school. Due to the lack of understanding of questions evident in the learner's written tasks, she was unable to answer questions or show understanding. The learner simply copied information that did not relate to the questions being posed. Comprehension skills were therefore very poor. Basic language skills were lacking. Reasoning and critical thinking skills, especially when writing an essay, seemed to be a problem.

Learner F-Grade 5

From what the teacher observed and diarised, the learner was generally well mannered, but could be withdrawn at times. He was unable to read and write comprehensively and was unable to carry out tasks independently. Tasks presented to him were done verbally. In terms of written capabilities, he was not able to construct sentences and found it difficult to put his thoughts on paper.

From viewing the learner's workbooks, I deduced that the learner was not familiar with single sounds and was therefore unable to construct simple three letter words. Sentence construction consisted mostly of single sentences. His sentences appeared to be incoherent. It was also evident that the learner was unable to work independently and needed constant intervention and support. These significant difficulties in reading confirmed interviews conducted in Theme 1, Section 4.3.1.

Learner G-Grade 6

The teacher recorded that she was concerned that the learner was really struggling in class. He was known as the school bully and was ill disciplined in class. He performed well in soccer. His results, writing in his books and profiles as well as test performances testified to his barriers to learning. Writing skills and letter formation were poor. Poor understanding hampered his comprehension skills.

Within the given the scenario presented by the learner it evident that he struggled with letter formation and letter consistency. At times, his writing was eligible. His writing also appeared to vary in size.

Learner H-Grade 6 (Teacher commented)

The teacher recorded that this learner never seemed to hand in assignments or tasks on time and was definitely not task orientated. Most of his work remained incomplete, and he demonstrated a lack of concentration in class. His handwriting was also testimony to his inability to focus. Comprehension type questions were quite difficult for him to understand. He had a lovely personality and excelled in sport.

The record of observations of the learners' work indicated that he did not complete tasks. His handwriting was poor, especially with regard to letter formation and sentence construction. It is clear that the learner's reading abilities hampered comprehension, which results in his inability to answer comprehension questions correctly. This confirms the interviews conducted in Theme 1, Section 4.3.2.

4.10   REFLECTIONS

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:334) define a reflex journal as a continuous record of the decisions made during the emergent design and rationale. This allows for justification, based on the available information at the time, of the modifications of the research problem and strategies. Furthermore it is stated that a reflex journal traces the researcher's ideas and personal reactions throughout the fieldwork.

Researchers are urged to talk about themselves, "their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003:3). A reflective practice such as this aims to make visible to the reader the constructed nature of research outcomes, a construction that "originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003:3).

The aim of my research was to explore and describe the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's. The participants were primary school teachers (both male and female) in the Foundation and Intermediate phases.

My research project was interview based; I also scrutinised records, such as support forms and the learners' work. I viewed myself as the main "instrument" of the data collection process, and in addition used a journal to reflect. Initially, the task at hand seemed very daunting but as time progressed and I administered a number of interviews, light beckoned at the end of the tunnel.

The requirement to be objective alerted me to be vigilant. In essence, this factor may have hampered my ability to engage in the interview processes confidently.

Participants voluntarily agreed to be part of the study. On entering the site in which the interviews were to be conducted, I felt slightly intimidated, wondering how I would be received and how the participants would engage with my area of study.

Fortunately, the interviews turned out to be quite informative. On observing the participants' behaviour, I could gather that they also had a need to express themselves; this study provided them with a welcome platform to voice their opinions and concerns.

Through my one-on-one interviews with the participants, I gained a lot of insight as well as understanding of the challenges they faced on a daily basis. To a great

extent, there was similarity between the issues they raised; as a teacher I had experience of the very same issues and concerns raised.

One of the negative constraints was the collection of documents from the teachers who participated in this study. Due to the fact that their documentation was not forthcoming as anticipated, my study was decelerated, as I had to wait for the documentation to proceed.

In conclusion, the journey has been rather fruitful and informative, in that my horizons were broadened and knowledge was acquired that can be shared and built upon.

4.11   CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in this study in order to answer the research question, which pertains to the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support to learners who have mild intellectual disabilities. The chapter commenced with the introduction, followed by discussions based on the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data collected. Subsections for the interviews were structured into themes and sub-themes, in terms of which the interviews conducted, were categorised. Documents forming part of data collection instruments were viewed, analysed and discussed and reflective notes were compiled by the researcher.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a comprehensive account of semi-structured interviews relating to the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with MID's. It also analysed and interpreted the interviews conducted with the research participants. The chapter also divulges how documents in the form of learners' workbooks and tests, as well as teachers' records, were analysed and interpreted with reference to the topic being investigated.

This chapter will focus on the implications of the research recommendations, informed by the findings, the significance, limitations and the unique contributions of the study.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter Two, it was stated that the policy on EWP6 (DoE, 2001) was the main policy guiding Inclusive Education in South Africa, supported by other policies such as SIAS (DBE, 2008a, 2014), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011) and the Guidelines for Inclusive Learning and Teaching (DBE, 2010) (see Section 2.2). It is through these policies that South African learners who experience barriers to learning and development should be supported. It is therefore important that, as the researcher, I should discuss the implications of this research for different structures of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), informed by the themes that were identified (see Table 4.1).

The implications will also be drawn by considering all structures as identified in the theoretical framework used in this study, namely Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. As a researcher, I consider that the school, the family, the

community and the entire society can play a role in ensuring that learners who experience barriers to learning and development, in this case, those with mild intellectual disabilities, are supported.

5.2.1 Implications for DBE National office

- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) if constant workshops were held to ensure that reading and comprehension skills are thoroughly consolidated. Employing this strategy would improve the level of skilled and well-equipped citizens, which could have a positive effect on the national economy.
- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) to ensure that policies on learning support strategies are fully implemented throughout all schools, including full service schools through monitoring, support and evaluation.
- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) if learning support strategies would result in better grades and pass rates to provide more skilled learners.
- Socio-economic problems result in learners remaining in school for a longer period, placing an additional financial burden on the Department. It would benefit the DBE (National Office) in collaboration with the community for programmes addressing prevalent socio-economic barriers like poverty, substance and drug abuse, gangster activities unemployment and many more, as mentioned in Theme 3.
- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) if language barriers could be addressed through more policies and programmes for teacher training to support learner diversity and equity amongst all.
- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) if poor curriculum coverage could be addressed in terms of barriers to learning which ultimately results in poor national pass rates and standards not being met. Regular follow-up should be done through district departments and moderation workshops should be conducted on a regular basis.
- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) if teachers could be trained and equipped with the necessary skills so that education would be more effective and teacher morale would be boosted; this would ultimately have a positive

effect on education and on teachers' attitudes regarding teaching and learning.

- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) to ensure that support structures would result in functional Departmental services, less frustration amongst teachers, and improved communication channels between the Department and the district school, which will in turn result in positive growth amongst teachers.

- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) to ensure that multi-level approaches are used to assist learners with barriers to learning and take the strain and burden from learners and teachers in currently overcrowded classes if adopted on national level.

- It would benefit the DBE (National Office) to ensure that practical activities are employed to improve skilled labour, which is needed for the development of the country.

5.2.2 Implications for DBE Provincial office

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) to embark on collaborative language training workshops for teachers. Specific programmes should target comprehension skills, improving literacy levels and specific strategies regarding reading skills.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) if learning support strategies were implemented to ensure the sufficient training of teachers, including more regular workshops on support strategies.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) to ensure that overcrowded classrooms do not lead to unhappy parents and teachers closing down schools to demonstrate their disapproval. Provincial Office should also ensure that the learner-teacher ratio is allocated appropriately to prevent the disruption of the quality teaching of learning due to disaffected parents. More teachers should be employed in areas where they are needed to make sure that quality teaching and learning takes place.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) to ensure that all socio-economic problems are addressed, inter alia through awareness campaigns in schools

and within the community. This will in turn prevent socio-economic problems like gangster activities, drug, alcohol abuse and unemployment from escalating and depriving learners of a good education.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) to promote policies and programmes regarding the different languages that could benefit learners from various ethnic groups.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) to ensure that differentiation and a flexible curriculum suit the needs of all learners, in order to accommodate and raise the work ethos amongst teachers and learners.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) if teacher training could result in better equipped teachers and more effective support to learners. Teachers' attitudes would also improve if the problem regarding barriers to learning were to be addressed in an effective manner and if the necessary support structures, especially DBSTs, were in place.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) if multi-level teaching together with DBST and professional support, could better the performance of teachers and increase overall learner success.

- It would benefit the DBE (Provincial Office) if practical activities were inculcated to improve and promote the idea of learners being developed in a particular skill in order to fend for themselves in a developmental society.

5.2.3 Implications for School Management Teams (SMTs)

- It could benefit the SMT (School Management Team) if poor reading and comprehension with low concentration problems among learners were to be addressed by means of regular training programmes, to lessen frustration among both learners and teachers in the following grade and prevent escalating failure rates. It could also improve discipline at schools and boost the morale of the teachers.

- It would benefit the SMT if the methodology of the multi-level teaching approaches and individual teaching could increase success rates amongst learners. Practical activities, in turn, will provide learners with opportunities to further their careers in order for them to sustain themselves.

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- It would benefit the SMT if a more realistic teacher-learner ratio could be implemented to prevent overcrowded classrooms in which learners would not receive quality education. The SMT could also ensure that strategic measures (for example, governing body posts) are taken to ensure that additional teachers are recruited where they are needed, especially in overcrowded classrooms.

- It would benefit the SMT to embark on programmes encouraging parents and young adults to become involved in school activities, for example, sport coaching and assisting with school outings.

- It would benefit the SMT to introduce language teachers who are fully equipped and able to assist learners in their various languages to improve literacy and communication.

- It would benefit the SMT to introduce teachers to regular training programmes and workshops. The ILST could also assist teachers at the school by means of regular sessions regarding assessments and challenges teachers face. This in turn is how successful intervention strategies can be introduced.

- It would benefit the SMT to ensure that support teams like the DBST and ILST are invited regularly to the school to address problems in the teaching and learning environment. This would encourage teachers to develop more positive attitudes towards their teaching.

- It would benefit the SMT to ensure that teaching strategies, like multi-level teaching, result in the identification of learning problems and the remediation thereof, especially in terms of individual barriers to learning.

- It would benefit the DBE (SMT) to introduce practical activities in aid of stimulating and promoting skills development amongst learners who are not cognitively inclined, as learners must be educated holistically.

5.2.4 Implications for Classrooms

- The study revealed that most learners battled with reading and comprehension; it could benefit teachers if they could give learners new words to increase their vocabulary and enrich their communication. The teachers could also encourage learners to use such words.

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- It would benefit teachers to make use of strategies like multi-level teaching in aid of monitoring and the effective assessment of learners' progress. Individual support promotes better self-esteem amongst learners and their enhanced feeling of importance could well translate into better grades. Practical activities would further prepare the learners for future development in their identified strengths. An element of self-fulfilment will be evoked, as the learner will realise his/her potential.

- It would benefit teachers if classrooms were not so overcrowded, in order to promote sufficient quality teaching and learning as well as curb disciplinary problems. Teachers would also be able to reach and effectively support those learners in need of extensive support.

- It would benefit teachers to ensure that socio-economic problems were addressed by means of good interaction and communication with parents, as well as awareness lessons/campaigns regarding substance abuse amongst learners. It would further benefit teachers if parents were invited to assist in the classroom with learners or chores like the covering of books and invigilating.

- It would benefit teachers to ensure that the language of learning and teaching impacts on learners positively if they are taught in their mother tongue. However, It might impact negatively on their comprehension and communication skills and literacy levels could be affected if learners are not taught in their mother tongue.

- It would benefit teachers to ensure that they attended training sessions and workshops presented on a regular basis in order to stay in touch with changes and new developments in education. This would serve as motivation and reduce negative attitudes amongst teachers.

- It would benefit teachers to ensure that collaboration with the support structures (DBSTs) and ILSTs is active, in order to improve the quality of teaching and classroom practices, as teachers are in constant need of support. It would also equip teachers to employ effective teaching strategies and motivate their learners. This will assist in ensuring that they are updated regarding curriculum and educational issues.

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section will highlight the recommendations flowing from the themes identified in this study.

Theme One dealt with the intellectual disabilities observed by teachers in mainstream schools. Significant difficulties in reading and comprehension stood out as the main challenges experienced in the classrooms. The recommendation would be that perceptual skills in the Foundation Phase could be thoroughly consolidated by teachers, as these skills would prepare learners for formal reading. Informal reading of labels and advertisements in the classroom could occur on a daily basis for learners to get used to letters and sounds. Instruction for reading should be intense, consistent and continuous.

Learning support teachers could identify the areas in reading that need attention. Shared reading, reading out loud with peers, comprehension skills and vocabulary building are all important aspects in need of consolidation. Attention deficit problems could be dealt with by means of additional activities, especially tasks that are fun and exciting for learners.

Theme Two dealt with the learner support approaches used by teachers. Multi-level teaching could be integrated with scaffolding and group work. Learners should be comfortable, engaged in activities that allow them to function on their level of ability.

As these learners are not able to consume the same amount of work than their peer learners in mainstream, teachers should utilise the curriculum in such a way that the content remains the same, but is presented in a different way for learners with barriers so that they can achieve the desired outcomes. Whole group instruction, in which all learners are involved in the introduction of an activity or lesson, could be done to observe which learners should be placed in smaller groups for further consolidation.

Differentiation of the curriculum and assessment standards could be utilised and introduced by the Department of Education to cater for the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning. The ILST should be fully functional in the differentiation process, to assist teachers. District support teams could focus on providing teachers with the necessary support and management skills to inculcate these skills at an institutional level; this will in turn foster good educational practices. Furthermore, assessments should cater for learners with MID's, and aspects like extra time, oral assessments and continuous assessments should be considered. Here again, the individual learner's needs and abilities should be taken into consideration. Scaffolding and the use of a step by step approach are also desirable.

Individual support is crucial, in the sense that not all learners are capable of working in groups. Teachers could identify and assess which learners are in need of individual support, and allow and create opportunities to assist and support these learners. This can be done while the rest of the class are involved in an activity and without making it obvious.

In Theme Three, many challenges were identified, and the following recommendations are suggested. Firstly, regarding the challenge of overcrowded classrooms, it is highly recommended that teachers attend regular workshops orchestrated by departmental officials to learn essential classroom management principles. The Department of Education should ensure that the national learner to teacher ratio is maintained throughout the districts.

In terms of socio-economic problems, parental involvement came strongly to the fore as one of the major problems. It is suggested that parents be informed and skilled in terms of values and morals through workshops by the School Governing Body. Parents should be encouraged to take part in school activities, for example by attending parent-teacher meetings, to follow up on their children's scholastic progress.

Language of learning and teaching (LOLT) seems to be a huge problem. The recommendation is that parents should ensure that learners enrol at an early age to

easily acquire and learn the new language of learning and teaching at the school of attendance.

Based on the fact that the participating teachers experienced the curriculum as loaded, differentiation of the curriculum as well as flexibility should be encouraged. This could be employed on a continuous basis, and alternative assessment tasks should be provided for learners with barriers to learning.

Teacher training is a crucial aspect that could be filtrated throughout the districts to ensure that teachers are fully equipped and skilled to provide quality education.

It is important that teachers, in the process of completing their teaching career, be introduced to and trained to address barriers to learning. Tertiary institutions could incorporate modules or programmes that address this important component. Many teachers, especially the older generation, have been trained to be mainstream teachers only. The younger, less experienced teachers also seem to have difficulty in addressing barriers to learning in the classroom. Teacher training is a fundamental aspect of being in the teaching fraternity: policies, guidelines and learners' diverse needs always need to be revisited, and by revisiting, appropriate intervention strategies could be employed.

Support structures, such as DBSTs, could collaborate with ILSTs in the implementation of the curriculum. DBSTs could provide intensive support regarding appropriate curriculum strategies to support teaching and learning, especially in the case of learners with MID's.

Teachers' attitudes could be improved with the implementation of training and workshops on supporting learners with barriers and identifying these barriers to learning. Teachers could make use of the available policy documents, such as the SIAS and Guidelines for Inclusive Learning and Teaching Policy, to familiarise themselves with implementing teaching strategies and the identification of barriers to learning.

5.4 STRATEGIES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Ethical clearance to undertake this study was given by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa. Written permission and consent was obtained from the Eastern Cape Department of Education, the school principals of the participating schools, teachers and parents. A consent form, with detailed information regarding the purpose of the study and the manner in which data would be collected, was given to each participant. All participants were assured that all information provided, would be treated confidentially and that the names of the participating schools and participants would not be divulged. The use of pseudonyms instead of the real names of participants or schools was administered in order to protect the identities of participants and schools in every possible way.

Interviews with the participants were audio recorded, with their permission, in order to capture their individual responses during the interview process. Participants were also informed that participation was on a voluntary basis and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without being penalised in any way.

Interviews were captured and transcribed verbatim. Informal checks were made with the participants during the data collection process to ensure accuracy. Data was then analysed, and emergencies, similarities and differences were identified and categorised into themes and sub-themes.

Trustworthiness was maintained in the sense that schools and participants were not mentioned in the study. Trustworthiness was further ensured by the researcher's honest communication and openness towards the participants regarding the study, and the researcher approached research activities with much care and in total fairness.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The following future studies are recommended:

- A study could be conducted on the role of parents in providing support for learners with MID's in mainstream schools.
- A study could be conducted on a learner support class within a mainstream school.
- A study could be conducted on supporting teachers in providing learning support for learners with barriers to learning.
- A study could be conducted on the role of School-based Support Teams in providing support for learners with MID's at primary mainstream schools.
- A study could be conducted on the empowerment of parents and guardians in rendering support for learners experiencing barriers to learning.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

A number of limitations in this study should be acknowledged. The study was limited to four schools only – a minority – where in actual fact many schools within the given area were experiencing the same challenges. The collection of relevant documentation, which served as part of data collection, proved to be a problem, as the respective schools were not forthcoming; this hampered my progression in terms of my findings and overall analysis.

5.7 UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS OF RESEARCH

The findings of this research contributed to the fact that this study could be used to motivate and encourage teachers at primary schools in supporting learners with MID's.

5.7.1 Contribution to policy

This research highlighted the concerns of teachers with regard to the implementation of policies, without the proper training of the teachers involved. This study could raise the awareness that the National Department of Basic Education as well as the District offices need to realise how top down policy implementation, without the consultation of teachers and schools, has affected the smooth running of the educational system as a whole, especially regarding the education of learners with barriers to learning.

5.7.2 Contribution to theory and practice

This study could help ensure that the challenges faced by teachers are addressed appropriately and that learning support strategies are implemented in each and every classroom. The establishment of SBSTs at schools and the support rendered by DBSTs could result in the more successful teaching of learners experiencing barriers to learning,

5.7.3 Contribution in terms of staying in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory framework

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system emphasises the fact that the learner is surrounded by support systems, all integrated with one another, and that none of these systems can function on its own.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter serves to elaborate on the findings from the collection and analysis of the research data, gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Recommendations on the various themes and sub-themes were discussed in depth and suggestions for further studies have been included. The limitations of the study were also indicated.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNISA | university of south Africa

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

15 July 2015

Ref #:2015/07/15/47108274/35/MC
Staff#: Mrs VD Wentzel
Staff Number #. 47108274

Dear Mrs Wentzel

Decision: Ethics Approval

Researcher
Mrs VD Wentzel
Tel: ~2741 364 3438
vdwentzel@telkomsa.net

Supervisor
Dr M. Mavuso
College of Education
Department of Inclusive Education
Tel: +2712 429 8635
mavusmf@unisa.ac.za

Proposal: Primary school teacher's experiences of providing learning support for learners with mild intellectual difficulties in the mainstream schools

Qualification: M Ed in Inclusive Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for 2 years.

For full approval: *The application/ resubmitted documentation was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 15 July 2015.*

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

1) *The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*

2) *Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee.*

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
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An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.

3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Note:

The reference number **2015/07/15/47108274/35/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication (e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters) with the intended research participants, as well as with the College of Education RERC.

Kind regards,

Dr M Claassens
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC

Prof VI McKay
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARENTS

Date: _____

Researcher: Mrs. Velma Wentzel

Contact Details: Cell no: 073 6011 429 /
Email address: vdwentzel@telkomsa.net

Dear Parent/Guardian

You are friendly requested to grant permission to Mrs. Velma Wentzel, who is conducting research at the school where your son/daughter is attending, under the supervision of Dr. M. Mavuso from the University of South Africa (UNISA).

In order for the research to be conducted, the workbooks of your son/daughter will be used as part of the data collection instruments. You are required to provide a written consent that will include your full name and initials, signature and date to verify that you understand and agree to the conditions.

We will provide you with the necessary information to assist you to understand the study and explain what would be expected. Please feel free to ask the researcher to clarify anything that is not clear to you.

You have the right to query concerns regarding the study at any time. Immediately report any new problems during the study, to the researcher. Contact details of the researcher are provided. Please feel free to make contact at any given time.

Furthermore, it is important that you are aware of the fact that the ethical integrity of the study has to be approved by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee of the University (CEDU REC). The CEDU REC consists of a group of independent experts that has the responsibility to ensure that the rights and welfare of participants in research are protected and that studies are conducted in an ethical manner. Studies cannot be conducted without CEDU REC's approval. Queries with regard to the rights of the researcher using these workbooks as part of the data collection instrument can be directed to my supervisor, Dr. M. Mavuso at the University of South Africa (UNISA): telephone number 012 4298635 or email at mavusmf@unisa.ac.za.

Although your son/daughter's identity will at all times remain confidential, the results of the research study may be presented at scientific conferences or in specialist publications.

This informed consent statement has been prepared in compliance with current statutory guidelines and no names of learners will be divulged.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Velma Wentzel
RESEARCHER

✂ REPLY SLIP_____

I have read the Project Information Statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that:

- Participation is voluntary.

- I may decide to withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.

- The learners' names will not be used and individual learners will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.

- A report of the findings will be made available to the parent.

- I may seek further information on the project at any given time or stage from Mrs. Velma Wentzel.

I freely and voluntarily give my consent for the viewing of my son/daughter's workbooks as part of the research project.

FULL NAME OF PARENT: _____
SIGNATURE OF PARENT: _____
DATE: _____

APPENDIX C

The Principal   29 July 2015

<u>**Re: Request for permission to conduct research in schools**</u>

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Velma Dianne Wentzel, and I am a part-time M.Ed student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The research I wish to conduct for my Master dissertation involves the PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PROVIDING LEARNING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. M. Mavuso at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Dr. Mavuso can be contacted on 012-4298635 or e-mail at mavusmf@unisa.ac.za.

I hereby request your permission to conduct a study with homogeneous teachers in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases at the school at any convenient time or after school hours. This investigation will be guided by strict code of ethics as prescribed by the College of Education Ethics Committee of UNISA. All data collected will be treated within the strictest confidence and neither the school nor the teachers will be identifiable in any reports that are written. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The role of the school is voluntary and the school principal may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty.

The objective of the study is to explore and describe the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities, ascertain ways in which primary school teachers provide learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities and to use the primary school teachers' experiences to formulate guidelines that could be used to provide learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities.

The outcome of this study will have benefits for your school and community, in that it will present an opportunity for primary school teachers to express their views on their experiences of providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities. The findings could be shared and used by other primary school teachers in the area and could possibly influence the training of primary school teachers on learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities.

There are no anticipated risks in this study. Feedback procedures will entail face-to-face meetings and group meetings with the participants.

Your's in education.

_____
Mrs. V.D. Wentzel
Contact number: 0736011429   e-mail: vdwentzel@telkomsa.net

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

I have read the Project Information Statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that:

- The role of the school is voluntary.
- I may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty.
- Teachers will be invited to participate.
- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.
- The participants nor the schools' names will be used and participants will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- The school will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- A report of the findings will be made available to the school.
- I may seek further information on the project from Velma Wentzel at any given time or stage.

I, …………………………………. (Principal), hereby grant/do not grant permission to Velma Wentzel to conduct her school-based inquiry at ………....................Primary School.

SIGNATURE:………………………….

FULL NAME:…………………………..

DATE: …………………………....

APPENDIX D

Dear …………………………………   Date: _____

INVITATION TO TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a research study I, Velma Dianne Wentzel, am conducting as part of my research as a master's student entitled: ***Primary school teachers' experiences of providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities*** at the University of South Africa.

Permission for the study has been given by the Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience with the topic being explored.

I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part. The importance of research in education is substantial and well documented. In this interview I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information can be used to improve the quality of learning and teaching of learners with mild intellectual disabilities.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 45-60 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient for you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points.   All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 5 years under lock and key. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0736011429 or by e-mail at vdwentzel@telkomsa.net. My supervisor can be contacted at 012 429 8635 or by e-mail at mavusmf@unisa.ac.za

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

…………………………
V.D. Wentzel

CONSENT FORM

 I have read the information presented in the information letter about the study

Primary school teachers' experiences of providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in education. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and add any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant's name: ………………………………………………………………………

Participant's signature: ………………………………………………………………………

Researcher Name: ………………………………………………………………………

Researcher signature: ………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX E

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT PRIMARY SHOOLS IN THE PORT ELIZABETH DISTRICT

The District Director
Department of Education: Ethel Valentine

Sutton Road

North End

PORT ELIZABETH
6000
....(date)

TITLE: PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN PROVIDING LEARNING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Dear Sir

RE: Request to conduct research at Primary Schools in the Port Elizabeth District

My name is Velma Wentzel and I am currently a permanent teacher at Fontein Primary School in Port Elizabeth, as well as a part-time M. Ed. student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am doing my research under the supervision of Dr. Mavuso who can be contacted on 012 4298635 or by e-mail at mavusmf@unisa.ac.za.

I hereby request your permission to conduct a study with twelve homogeneous teachers in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases at four participating schools within the District of Port Elizabeth. This investigation will be guided by strict code of ethics as prescribed by the ethics committee of UNISA. All data collected will be treated within the strictest confidence and neither the school nor the teachers will be identifiable in any reports that are written. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The role of the school is voluntary and the school principal may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty.

The objective of the study is to explore and describe the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities, ascertain ways in which primary school teachers provide learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities and to use the primary school teachers' experiences to formulate guidelines that could be used to provide learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities.

The outcome of this study will have benefits for your school and community, in that it will present an opportunity for primary school teachers to express their views on their experiences of providing learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities, the findings could be shared and used by other primary school teachers in the area and could possibly influence the training of primary school teachers on learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities.

There are no anticipated risks in this study. Feedback procedures will entail face-to-face meetings and group meetings with the participants.

Yours in education.

_____

Mrs. V.D. Wentzel (Persal Number: (50379542)
Contact number: 0736011429
e-mail: vdwentzel@telkomsa.net
Supervisor: Dr. M. Mavuso

•••

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CONSENT FORM

I, ……………………………………….., have read the Project Information Statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that:

- The role of the school is voluntary
- I may decide to withdraw the schools' participation at any time without penalty
- Teachers will be invited to participate and that permission will be sought from them.
- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.
- Neither the participants nor the schools' names will be used and participants will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- The school will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- A report of the findings will be made available to the school.
- I may seek further information on the project from Velma Wentzel at any given time or stage.

I, ……………………………………. (District Director), hereby grant/do not grant permission to Velma Wentzel to conduct her school-based inquiry at Primary Schools in the District..

SIGNATURE:……………………………

FULL NAME:……………………………..

DATE: ……………………….....

APPENDIX F

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

PORT ELIZABETH DISTRICT OFFICE

Private Bag X3915, Sutton Rd, Sidwell, Port Elizabeth
☎ (041) 403 4445 / 0818941298 / 📠 0866552800
E-Mail pedro.vanvuuren@edu.ecprov.gov.za
Acting CES – IDS&G

TO: MRS. VD WENTZEL
CC: THE ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR
RE: PERMISSION GRANTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SELECTED SCHOOLS
DATE: 16 JUNE 2015

Dear Mrs. Wentzel

Warm Greetings

Permission is hereby granted to conduct research at the selected schools based on the following premises:

1. This letter is given to the selected schools
2. The principal will be consulted in all of this
3. All current policies/prescripts of the DoE will be honoured iro of leave; school hours etc.
4. There will be a minimal disturbance iro teaching and learning
5. This will in no way distract from the current programme of the school and its concomitant programme with the DoE.

Thank You

Pedro J van Vuuren
Acting CES – IDS&G

E Mail: pedro.vanvuuren@edu.ecprov.gov.za
Cell: 0818941298
Office: 041-403445
Fax: 0866552800

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Velma Dianne Wentzel

TITLE OF STUDY.

Primary school teachers' experiences of providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this study: ***Primary school teachers' experiences of providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities.***

Please read and review the Interview Schedule and ask questions to clarify any uncertainties. You are free to stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. The first few questions are very simple.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to ***investigate the experiences of primary school teachers in providing learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities.***

DURATION

The researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with primary school teachers from four primary schools. The duration of the interviews will be approximately 45-60 minutes.

PROCEDURES

Data will be collected by means of unstructured interviews. All participants will be given as much time as they feel necessary to respond to questions. Participants will be allowed to withdraw from the interviews should they wish to do so. With the consent of each participant, interviews will be recorded, using a digital recorder. Interviews will then be transcribed. Copies of transcribed data will be available on request. A concerted effort for confidentiality will be made as research participants will not be requested to disclose their names or the name of their schools when answering interview questions. The researcher also guarantees that no names of schools or participants will be revealed in any reporting. No learners' names will be used or disclosed.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Participants are free to stop any proceedings during this research if they experience a feeling of discomfort. Participants may stop the interview at any given time and may choose not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable. There are no anticipated risks in the study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND/OR COMPENSATION

No participation benefit or forms of compensation are included in this study.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns, please make contact with Velma Wentzel at 0736011429 /041-3643438 or my supervisor, Mrs. M. Mavuso at 012-4298635/ mavusmf@unisa.ac.za

CONFIDENTIALITY

A concerted effort for confidentiality will be made, and research participants will not be requested to disclose their names or the names of their schools when answering interview questions. Information on the tape recorder will be kept save in a lock and discarded immediately after the research process has been completed. The findings of this study will be published in the form of a dissertation, articles and may be presented at conferences without naming any participant.

Researcher: Velma Dianne Wentzel

Contact details: 0736011429

Supervisor: Mrs. M.F. Mavuso

Contact Details: 012-429 8635

E-mail: mavusmf@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name of student	**:**	**Velma Wentzel**
Student No.	**:**	47108274
Degree	**:**	M.Ed.
Year	**:**	2015

Question 1

E: What is it like to provide learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in your classroom?

A: Hoe voel dit om ondersteuning te bied aan leerders met matige intellektuele gestremdhede?

Question 2

E: What is the nature of the intellectual disabilities that you encounter in your classroom?

A: Wat is die aard van die intellektuele gestremdhede wat u ondervind in die klaskamer?

Question 3

A: How do you provide learning support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in your classroom?

A: Hoe verskaf u ondersteuning aan leerders met matige intellektuele gestremdhede?

Question 4

E: What challenges do you encounter in providing learner support for learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities?

A: Watter soort uitdagings ondervind u in die verskaffing van leerder ondersteuning vir leerders met matige intellektuele gestremdhede?

Question 5

E: What intervention programmes are in place at your school to support learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities?

A: Watter intervensie programme is in plek by u skool vir die ondersteuning van leerders met matige intellektuele gestremdhede?

Question 6

E: In your opinion, how should learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities be supported in your school?

A: Uit u oogpunt, hoe behoort leerders met matige intellektuele gestremdhede ondersteun te word?

ABSTRACTS OF INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIPTIONS

Interview 5

Date: 31 August 2015

Research Interview No. 2 : Unstructured interview with Foundation Phase female teacher.

Transcripts are written verbatim. Names of people and institutions have been changed for confidentiality.

KEY: Researcher – R   *Participant – P*

Interview starts after some small talk to put the participant at ease.

Commencement of the actual interview.

R: Good morning Mr. Jones and thank you for this opportunity and uh your time. Let's start with the first question. What is it like to provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

P: *Thank you ma… mrs. Wentzel for affording me the opportunity to uh highlight certain challenges that we have in terms of learners, let's say uhm learners, with, special needs learners. The first thing for me is off course that uh unfortunately we find ourselves in a mainstream school and the learners with minor disabilities or intellectual ca… capasities are treated in the same way as mainstream learners because the curriculum do not provide assistance for them. They are exposed to the same curriculum as if they are mainstream learners. That is the one thing. The second thing is due to financial constraints and nothing else than that, inclusive education was introduced where they did not cater for… the Department did not cater for learners with mild intellectual capabilities. So, in short, that is the first challenge that we have at our school in terms of supporting these learners. The second thing equal to that is off course, most of the teachers have not been exposed to a, to to a qualification to cater for those learners. In other words, we have, for example, a number of learners that has done remedial teaching but they are not teaching those learners. They are only teaching, due to curriculum constraints, mainstream learners and the other teachers that haven't got the qualifications to work with these learners are teaching those learners that need special attention. I think those are some of the support problem, the, the, the challenges that we have in terms of assisting those learners. And, I want to conclude by saying this also; that our schools in terms of assisting those learners on another level, because those learners have a shorter attention span. And, they are more practical inclined, they are more focussed on sports activities and our schools unfortunately, and then I'm referring to the Northern Areas, are not doing justice in terms of catering for them culturally, sport wise and being involved with practical activities to enhance their performances also.*

R: If you say "another level", what do you mean by that?

P: (sighing) Another level in terms of you know, when you, when you start preparing yourself in terms of education, the, the, the foundation should be done properly, it should be good educationally funded and on that, especially those learners that have challenges, if the foundation is done well, then they are able to cope later in life and they might even be taken up in mainstream schools if they reach most probably grade seven and grade, grade six and grade seven, but if the foundation is not led, that level right, than those learners will struggle throughout their education and then they will become inevitably the dropouts in society. Those are the learners who will also give disciplinary problems on that level.

R: What is the nature of the intellectual disabilities that you encounter in your classroom or at your school?

P: *There are two important things that, that I can highlight. The learners struggle to read. Some of them struggle from limited space orientation where they for example, the 'p' they see for a 'b', and uh, the 's' and the 'z' or the 's' and a '2'. They are unable to discern that but the biggest problem, even with mainstream learners, reading is the greatest problem, because if you cannot read you cannot understand the questions. So it starts with reading. The second one is that they have problems in terms of concentrating. They only have a limited attention span, so that's why when, when, when you work with those learners, you need to be on the ball with your presentation so you cannot bore them because when they struggle for a long time, they become frustrated and uh then they cannot give meaningful input. So then you have to do an activity that relaxes them again uh in order then to give them, to get them to another level where they can start concentrating again. So that is basically wh… wh… the nature of it yes.*

R: Anything else, apart from the reading problem and uh …

P: *Yes off course*

R: attention span?

P: *Off course, mathematics. Mathematics is a great problem because if a learner has uh a mild intellectual problem, then off course, they are unable to think abstractly. And maths is something that you need to concentrate to focus and you need to discern certain calculations in your mind and if you are struggling at a lower level in terms of that and you have reading problems, off course you gonna struggle in maths. But I will also say uh uh as I said, there are three things then, it's the, the reading, i'ts the mathematics and off course, linked to that, concentration problems in terms of their, the limited uh, capa… capability, intellectual capability because those things go hand in h*and.

R: Alright. How do you provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

P: *Mam, the first thing for me that is most important, to create a class atmosphere that is conducive to learning. I try for the learners to enjoy, first of all, to be in my class. I try to give them an opportunity to express them in terms of not shouting at them, showing them love, caring for them, motivating them and encouraging them in my classroom. And uh, trying to make the lessons interesting by… to work on their level, in other words, say for example, you, you, you have to do a lesson, let's say it's natural science and technology, you need to do a lesson to look at the*

different habitats of, of, of, of living organisms or animals, then what I do, I try even to bring a model, or a real animal if it's a cat or a dog or a mouse to school to captivate their attention. So then, what they say, they say things that you see, you'll remember longer than just to hear it. So we… seeing, hearing and

Interview 7

Date: 3 September 2015

Research Interview No. 2 : Unstructured interview with Intermediate Phase female teacher.

Transcripts are written verbatim. Names of people and institutions have been changed for confidentiality.

KEY: Researcher – R   *Participant – P*

Interview starts after some small talk to put the participant at ease.

COMMENCEMENT OF ACTUAL INTERVIEW

R: Good morning Mrs. O'Connor and thank you so much for this opportunity and for your time and I'm so sorry (laughing) for all the times we couldn't get together uh, but anyway, let's start; Question one: What is it like to provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

P: *I find it very rewarding. Uh, these children come from different backgrounds and uh there's lots of problems, underlying problems that they have which we not aware of. They come to school with all these problems and to see a child uh just achieve something for the day, really makes me feel good.*

R: ok, anything else?

P: *No, nothing really on that one that I can think of.*

R: Ok, let's go on. What is the nature of the intellectual disabilities that you encounter in your classroom?

P: *Uh, we have children that have ADHD as well as foetal, alcohol foetal syndrome, that they have, uhm, I am convinced that there is one girlie in one of the grade four classes that is actually autistic and nobody seems to pick this up, but I've noticed from her mannerisms she doesn't say much, uhm, she doesn't do much in the class, she seems like she's in a daze all the time but most of all problems, I could be wrong with her. She needs to be tested properly. We are in the process of having her being placed at another school at the moment and it's just taking forever and I don't know quite what tests have been done thus far in order for her to actually be placed in another school. If they do decide on Sunset, I doubt she's going to make it there because Sunset is… she won't even… her capabilities*

won't even fit Sunset. So uhm I'm really thinking that she might just be autistic. The others is more ADHD and uh, alcohol foetal syndrome that we have.

R: How do you provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

P: *Very difficult with the ADHD because they can't sit still, they can't concentrate, they give us a tough time having to… they distract the rest of the children. So the only way that I really try and get them going is to see what they're really interested in because sometimes they are bright children and then they finish their work and disturb the rest of the children. On the other hand we have the ADHD which totally does no work at all. They walk around all the time and disturb and disrupt all the time. So we always try to check… it's more because they don't really know what's going on in the classroom and what's happening. So that's the ones that I usually would see if they good at drawing, if they good at something else, give them books that they can at least see pictures and those are the types of things that actually keep them still but uh somehow it doesn't improve on the concentration, unfortunately.*

R: What challenges do you encounter in providing learner support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities?

P: *What challenges? On the whole every day is a challenge in these classes… in the class and unfortunately,uh, in the past, about two years ago, we had periods where we had remedial teaching, where we could actually teach them on their own. Now the challenges that I have, it's very difficult when there's forty children in the class and you have maybe six of them that's, that has these uh ADHD or whatever, other mental intelectu… intellectual disabilities that they do have because you cannot concentrate on them. On their own, the class is too vast. You cannot neglect the rest of the children to actually just work on, on these uh few children that need your attention and they really do need the attention but it's very difficult because then the others start getting out of hand and then they see you working with these then they also want to be answering the questions while you are working with these children.*

R: You mentioned the remedial teaching that you've done in the past. Can you tell me more about that? How you… (interrupted)

P: *Uhm, we had, there were four of us teachers who were involved in remedial teaching. We had a full load of uh subjects that we taught and then we were given additional free periods a week to fill our time. So those were made remedial classes and in that period we would go the classes, make a list of the children that needed remedial teaching, take them out of the class and teach them for that period and sent them back. So it used to run, be run on a two three days a week basis for one period per week. That's how it worked and uh I felt that the children learnt quite a bit in that short time. They were easier to work with because they were with children that had the same capabilities as themselves. Now when they in the class, again, one of the challenges, it's not easy to teach them on their own because they know everybody else is watching them and why they being taught alone and they cannot understand anything, but when they with a group of their own capabilities, then they very comfortable and they actually learn better. Then unfortunately those classes came to an end.*

R: Uhm, we talk about challenges now, do you have any other challenges in your classroom apart from the ADD and the… classroom size?

P: *You know we had, classroom has always been a problem. For many a year now, it's been a problem where we sitting with over forty children. You know, when I started teaching we had 25, 26 in a classroom. It was a breeze, it was really a breeze. Now, unfortunately were sitting with this 40, 45 children in the class. Space is a big problem, there's no uh uh, space you know for motivational corners where they can sit and read and play with blocks or educational toys that we used to in the past. There's no library corners any longer. Now we take them to the library and they sit as a class, and we give out books and they sit and read and we call them one by one to the front and read and*

CONFIDENTIAL

Interview 3

Date: 25 August 2015

Research Interview No. 2 : Unstructured interview with Foundation Phase female teacher.

Transcripts are written verbatim. Names of people and institutions have been changed for confidentiality.

KEY: Researcher – R   *Participant – P*

Interview starts after some small talk to put the participant at ease.

Commencement of the actual interview.

R: Good afternoon Mrs. Jones, let's start right away. Question number 1: What is it like to provide learning support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

P: *Ok,uhm, it's a daunting task. Uhm, a lot is expected from the teacher because uhm we're expected to plan more than we normally would because now, you've got to plan for your learners that are basically, uh, where they supposed to be, in a mainstream set up, uhm with thecap… uh, caps curriculum, taking that into consideration, and then you also have to down scale and downgrade your same lesson, uhm you know, to, so that it would adapt or be suitable for the learners with the mild uhm intellectual disabilities. So it is daunting, and it's, it's tiring because, and it's taxing on you as a person because you expected more time on these learners and most, more often than not, they don't get to uhm complete the task or you hardly see progress because of what, you've got to split yourself. So time is really a factor uhm with that.*

R: If you say split yourself, can you just elaborate a bit on that?

P: *Ok, with regard to the mainstream, children in the mainstream, we're all in the mainstream but you've got to (pause) now plan your lessons effectively. So, now I've got two lessons but the same concept. So now I'm teaching grade 3 work and I'm teaching grade 2 work or grade 1 work or sometimes grade R work, and … That's what I mean when I say you got to split yourself. So your group work is excessive, it's a lot. You've got to work with uhm same capability groups and a lot of the times we are sitting with children uhm with mild, with these disabilities that, that are not going to cope, that, that should actually be uh phased into a special school, you know, from grade one already, and now you sitting with those children in grade 3 and it's difficult and some of them never ever catch up. They never catch up. (noise from learners talking outside)*

R: How do you… what is the nature of the intellectual disabilities that you encounter in your classroom?

P: *Ok, the nature (pause) mainly uhm,they, ok they vary. I could say that they vary, but mainly I find that reading is the biggest, biggest problem that we ever encounter. Our children lack stimulation at home. Uh, and that is a major reason for why they, they don't perform as they should. The other thing is, at our school particularly, uhm we have, it's a dual medium school, pardon (coughing) and some, we've got two Afrikaans classes and one English class per grade, but many of the parents put their children in an English class knowing that the child is actually Afrikaans speaking at home and ninety per cent of those children like, struggle because they speak Afrikaans at home and now they're expected to speak English in in class. So that is one of the things. And then, they don't, they don't understand what you're speaking about, so, you're got to go back and first speak in Afrikaans and ok, a few of them are also Xhosa speaking uhm children and … But I find that the Xhosa speaking children actually work more at home than the ones that are doing, that are actually Afrikaans speaking.*

R: Anything else?

P: *Ok, well, with regard to mathematics or numeracy or number concept uhm it's because of the language barrier again. The children don't know the different concepts in English, that's why it's hard to, you know, to grasp what they must actually do, so now it takes longer for them to uhm to get what they supposed to do because of the language. That's the thing.*

R: Apart from your uhm, academic uhm, barriers, like language and maths, do you have any other?

P: *Definitely behaviour, behaviour, I think the socio-economic group uhm, and the children, the kind of child that we work with here, is, is a different child. These children are extremely aggressive and playful and uhm never minded. They come to school and it's like they just here as if we're babysitters you know, not here to educate them. It's like we're just here to occupy them, you know, take the time out of the day en daar gaan ons weer (Afrikaans for there we go again). So it goes here and behaviour is definitely a major major…, it plays a big role 'cos the children that have behavioural problems, it's also because they have academic problems. They can't achieve at shool and that is what causes them, you know, to be like that. And then, gangsterism here, and everything that they're exposed to in the community also plays a role in their actions at school.*

R: So, what challenges do you encounter in proving learner support for your learners with mild intellectual disabilities?

P: Challenges?

R: Sorry, can I just change the question around? How do you provide learning support for your learners with disabilities?

P: *Uh, It's a difficult task to do. Very difficult. But how we do it is; depending on the nature of the child's problem. Academically what I normally do is, uhm plan, uhm, get a work plan for that particular child, with whatever the child…, we call it uh, the individualised education plan. So if I see that Mark is struggling with a counting thing, uh, counting activities, counting on in two's, three's or whatever, I make sure that I get enough activities and enough concrete things that he could work with, you know, and get him to do that before we start with our lessons. That's what I would do.*