

**THE NEEDS OF A CENTRE-OF-LEARNING-BASED TEAMS
IN IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION**

by

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A mother does not “give” walking or talking to her child : walking and talking are not things which she “has” and of which she gives a piece to her child. Rather, the mother helps the child to develop its own ability to walk and talk.

The teacher is in the same position. She is not giving to another something which she owns. She is helping the learner to develop his own potential and his own ability.

Only activities which involve learners doing something for themselves will provide an ongoing sense of achievement” (Julius Nyerere).

SUMMARY

Education in South Africa has been characterised by inequalities and discrimination for many years. The minister of Education (Professor Kadar Asmal, *The Star*, 1999:19) endorsed this statement when he stated that there is a crisis at each level of the education system, and that inequalities of the past have not been levelled out.

Since the coming to power of the first truly democratically elected government in the history of South Africa, many changes have taken place. The foundation for these changes is laid by a new constitution. Central to the constitution is the Bill of Rights, which ensures the rights of all citizens, as well as the rights of all learners to education. The rights of all learners to basic education are underwritten by the policy of Inclusive Education. This policy is in accordance with the international trend towards Inclusive Education, where all learners, including learners with barriers to learning and development, have a right to an education of their choice, in centres-of-learning wherever it is practical. This would then imply that teachers must be ready to work with all learners irrespective of barriers that they may have. However, teachers may not be able to provide a supportive environment to the learners if they themselves are not supported. Therefore, it would be important for every centre-of-learning to form a Centre-of-Learning-Based Team, which will focus on providing support to the school as a whole in an empowering way.

This study examines the needs of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in order to implement Inclusive Education. The primary functions and the composition of the team are mentioned. In addition, the responsibilities of the Centre-of Learning Based Team and the benefit of working as a team are explored. The emphasis throughout is on collaborative and team approaches, which have to be built. Parent involvement in planning, local policy making and provision of support to the Centre-of-Learning was found to be imperative. Teachers also need to be supported in a variety of ways if they are to embrace inclusion favourably.

This study describes the process of data analysis and reduction and identifies the main themes that emerge from the data. These themes are discussed within the framework of existing theory.

This study concludes by discussing specific recommendations for the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team, in order to implement Inclusive Education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | i |
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| SUMMARY | iii |
| | |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY | |
| | |
| 1.1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY | 1 |
| 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT | 6 |
| 1.4 THE AIM OF THE STUDY | 7 |
| 1.5 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS | 7 |
| 1.5.1 Centre-of-Learning-Based Team | 7 |
| 1.5.2 Inclusive Education | 8 |
| 1.5.3 Inclusion | 8 |
| 1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS | 9 |
| 1.6.1 The Research Design | 9 |
| 1.6.2 Data Collection Methods | 9 |
| 1.6.3 Data Analysis | 9 |
| 1.7 COURSE OF THE STUDY | 10 |
| 1.8 CONCLUSION | 10 |
| | |
| CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION | |
| | |
| 2.1 INTRODUCTION | 11 |
| 2.2 THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA | 11 |
| 2.3 INCLUSION | 13 |
| 2.3.1 Historical Development and Current International Perspectives of Inclusion | 15 |
| 2.3.1.1 International Perspective | 15 |
| 2.3.1.2 The South African Perspective of Inclusion | 18 |
| 2.4 CENTRE-OF-LEARNING-BASED TEAMS | 23 |
| 2.4.1 Support for Teachers in an Inclusive Program | 30 |
| 2.4.2 Characteristics of an Effective Centre-of-Learning-Based Team | 30 |

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 2.4.3 | Responsibilities of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team | 31 |
| 2.4.4 | Meeting the Challenge | 32 |
| 2.4.5 | The Team Approach | 34 |
| 2.5 | CONCLUSION | 35 |

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

| | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|----|
| 3.1 | INTRODUCTION | 37 |
| 3.2 | RESEARCH DESIGN | 37 |
| 3.2.1 | Characteristics of Research Design | 37 |
| 3.2.2 | Context of the Research | 38 |
| 3.2.3 | Problem and Purpose | 39 |
| 3.2.4 | Research Methods | 39 |
| 3.2.4.1 | Sampling | 39 |
| 3.3 | METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION | 40 |
| 3.3.1 | The Literature Review | 40 |
| 3.3.2 | Focus Group Interviews | 41 |
| 3.3.3 | Field Notes | 42 |
| 3.4 | METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS | 42 |
| 3.4.1 | Data Reduction | 43 |
| 3.4.2 | Clustering and Conceptualization | 43 |
| 3.5 | VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY | 44 |
| 3.5.1 | Internal Validity | 44 |
| 3.5.1.1 | Triangulation | 45 |
| 3.5.2 | External Validity | 46 |
| 3.5.3 | Reliability | 46 |
| 3.6 | ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS | 46 |
| 3.6.1 | Confidentiality and Anonymity | 46 |
| 3.6.2 | Voluntary Participation | 47 |
| 3.6.3 | Feedback | 47 |
| 3.7 | CONCLUSION | 47 |



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JOHANNESBURG

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

| | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| 4.1 | INTRODUCTION | 48 |
| 4.1.1 | The Research Problem | 48 |
| 4.2 | THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY | 48 |
| 4.2.1 | The Teachers | 48 |
| 4.2.2 | The Parents | 49 |
| 4.3 | METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS | 49 |
| 4.3.1 | The Process of Data Analysis and Reduction | 50 |
| 4.3.1.1 | An Example of Data Analysis from the Focus Group Interview: Teachers | 50 |
| 4.3.1.2 | An Example of Data Analysis from the Focus Group Interview: Parents | 52 |
| 4.4 | MAIN THEMES THAT EMERGED | 55 |
| 4.4.1 | Need for In-Service Training | 55 |
| 4.4.2 | Curriculum should be Flexible | 57 |
| 4.4.3 | Parents and the Community to be Educated | 58 |
| 4.4.4 | Number of Learners in a Class | 59 |
| 4.4.5 | To create a Culture of Respect and Acceptance for Diversity | 59 |
| 4.4.6 | Physical Resources | 61 |
| 4.5 | CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM RESEARCH FINDINGS | 62 |
| 4.6 | IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS | 63 |
| 4.6.1 | Implications for Current Theory | 63 |
| 4.6.2 | Implications for Further Research | 63 |
| 4.7 | RECOMMENDATIONS | 63 |
| 4.7.1 | Recommendations to Centre-of-Learning-Based Team | 64 |
| 4.7.2 | Areas in which the Centre-of-Learning can facilitate change | 64 |
| 4.8 | LIMITATIONS OF THE INQUIRY | 64 |
| 4.9 | FINAL COMMENTS | 65 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | | 66 |
| APPENDICES | | |
| Appendix A: Focus Group Interview with Teachers | | |
| Appendix B: Focus Group Interview with Parents | | |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 4.1 Teachers Qualifications and Experiences | 49 |
| Table 4.2 An Example of Data Analysis from Focus Group Interview: Teachers | 51 |
| Table 4.3 An Example of Data Analysis from Focus Group Interview: Parents | 53 |
| Table 4.4 Main Themes That Emerged | 55 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 2.1 Characteristics of Effective Collaborative Teams | 29 |
|---|----|



A list of abbreviations used in this study

| | |
|--------|--|
| NCSNET | National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training |
| NCESS | National Committee for Education Support Services |
| DNE | Department of National Education |
| ESS | Education Support Services |
| CLBT | Centre-of-Learning Based Team |
| LSEN | Learners with Special Education Needs |



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter various aspects of the study will be discussed including the background of the problem as well as the goal of the study. This will be followed by a discussion of the research question and the aim of the proposed study. A brief definition of the concepts central to the study will be provided and in conclusion, research methodology will be discussed.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

International trends towards a society that respects diversity emerged strongly through the World Conference on Education for All held in 1990. It was at this conference in Thailand that the commitment of "Education for all by the year 2000" was adopted. This was followed by the Salamanca Statement in 1994, the product of a conference held in the city of Salamanca, Spain, which shaped the agenda for inclusive education. The message which emanated from the conference spells out the principle that schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions (UNESCO, 1994:1). According to Saleh (in Newmark & Kachelhoffer, 1997:17) an increasing number of countries are embracing the principle of inclusive schooling for learners with special educational needs and are acknowledging the fact that mainstream schools should be the first option for every learner. Zigmond and Baker (in Pijl, Meijer & Hegarty, 1997:98) concur with this statement when they state that questions are being raised at this point in time about the efficacy of segregated placements and about the morality of excluding learners with disabilities from regular centres of learning. Models of service delivery, which seemed logical and appropriate in the past, are being challenged and new models are proposed.

There is an enormous diversity between and within the countries in the way inclusive schooling is given shape. The factors behind this diversity are varied, and these may include history, societal beliefs, financial resources, types of barriers distinguished and population density. For example, teacher attitudes in Sweden are strongly influenced by social democratic ideology; in Denmark they are influenced by the generally accepted drive for

normalisation; in the Netherlands by the availability of separate special schools all over the country (due in part to the high population density); and in the United States by a strict division of responsibilities between regular and special teachers. These differences make the transfer of practice from one country to another extremely problematic (Pijl, et al. 1997:121). The situation in South Africa is no exception.

The history of education for learners with “special needs” and educational support services in South Africa, like much of the history of our country reflects massive deprivation and lack of provision for the majority of people. The inequalities evident in the areas of concern addressed by the report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee for Educational Support Services (NCESS) (Department of National Education-DNE, 1997:21) can be directly attributed to those social, economic and political factors which characterised the history of South African society during the years of apartheid. This system has been supported by legislation and policy which entrenched these inequalities by institutionalising racial segregation, labelling learners with special needs and separating them from their peers (DNE, 1997:21). The South African Government had to focus on developing policy and practice around “inclusion” as one of the most complex and urgent issues facing the process of educational development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:235).

The past six years have therefore been characterised by dramatic constitutional and political changes in South Africa. According to Donald, et al. (1997:236) the constitution of 1996 has laid the foundation of a new democratic constitutional system and holds interesting and far-reaching changes for education in South Africa. As the supreme law of the country it defines the state and determines its structures and powers. Furthermore, it also contains a Bill of Rights in which the state guarantees and protects the basic rights of the individual. Education is a top-priority issue in South Africa and the inclusion of this right in the Bill of Rights places South Africa in the international context where similar rights are protected in international treaties and the constitution of other countries. Entrenched in the Bill of Rights, is the right of ALL learners, regardless of race, gender, colour, sexual orientation, disability, religion, belief, culture or language to a basic education (DNE, 1998:12).

It is important that all learners receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment that is consistent with their needs. This means that learners with special needs should, wherever possible and with appropriate support, be educated along others in the mainstream. Only where it is absolutely necessary, in terms of the learner’s particular needs,

should the learner be educated in a context which is separate from the mainstream (DNE, 1997:121). All aspects of the education system would need to be changed if it is to respond to the needs of all learners. Strategies and programmes traditionally aimed at meeting “special needs” must move away from an isolated focus on “changing the person”, to a systems-change approach. This means that we should not see the system as fixed and unchanging, where individual learners need to fit in, rather we should see the system as being able to be transformed so that it can accommodate individual differences among learners.

Strategies for transformation and development will have to be developed to facilitate this transition to achieve the new educational vision. Recommendation 14 in the report of the DNE, (1997:14) entitled “Quality Education for all”, suggests that education support personnel should focus their expertise on developing the capacity of centres of learning and members of the learning community through the development of centre-based support teams, with an emphasis on the role of teachers as a central point of importance for management and provision of support. In order for this to happen support services must be structured into the system and be integral to its development.

Historically in South Africa, Education Support Services (ESS) have been available to a small minority of learners and centres of learning as a result of apartheid legislation and the resulting disparities among the different race groups. There has also been a division between ESS and ‘special needs education’, which resulted in the provision of support services outside of mainstream education. Different services have usually been organised into separate and often rigid bureaucracies, which have been difficult to access. The nature of the services has tended to reflect highly specialised interventions directed at a limited number of individuals in predominantly urban areas. The ESS “has focused primarily on problems; has perceived these problems in primarily individual and medical terms; and has been primarily limited to individual interventions and problems in the education system itself have seldom been addressed by these services” (DNE, 1997:2). ESS has been problem-orientated. There has been a change over the past few years, internationally and locally, however, towards a more preventative and developmental approach, and towards supporting and developing the system. This has resulted in moves towards a more indirect, consultative approach to service delivery focusing on educator and parent training, institutional development strategies and greater involvement of centre-of-learning and community-based support (DNE, 1997:60). In a vision for the future of an integrated Education System in South Africa NCSNET/NCESS (1997:61) calls for a range of services,

which work together, to meet the needs of all learners and other aspects of the system should be developed. It is also emphasised that the development of support services in South Africa embraces community participation through the involvement of various community resources and relies primarily on community based approaches. It is important therefore that these services should form an integral part of the education system as a whole.

Pijl, et al. (1997:151) state that to include learners with special needs in an integrated system, it is necessary to change the regular curriculum, to train teachers, to redistribute funds and to organise support services. Without a basis in society it is very difficult to make these changes in education. Therefore, the NCSNET/NCESS (1997:87) report recommends that the educational support services should be governed at four levels, viz. national, provincial, district\community (local), and school (institutional). While the role of the councils at the national and provincial level would be more directed at overall policy development and co-ordination, curricular planning and resource allocation, the role of district\community would be more specific to the management and co-ordination of the centre-of-learning. Each centre of learning forms the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in order to enable the teachers to be able to meet the needs of the learners in an inclusive environment. It is important therefore, that all learners should have access to educational support services. A holistic and integrated approach to such services is envisaged, with the provincial Ministries of Health, Welfare and Labour. Collaborative management structures should be established through multidisciplinary and multisectoral councils and committees. The report maintains that the importance of including parents and representatives of relevant organisations in these support structures cannot be over-emphasised. The area of education support services provides one vital possibility for developing closer school-community links since the issues which are of central concern to education support services are also areas in which parents and community members can make particularly relevant contributions.

Given the importance of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in the effective implementation of inclusive education, it becomes imperative to conduct research in the various aspects of this area. The reason for researching about them is to find out how their existence can enable the teachers to be more productive and confident in addressing the different needs of learners in an inclusive environment. **What does educational support through the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team mean?** The term educational support has been stretched way beyond what traditional definitions describe. ESS includes all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners and to all aspects of the system. While

these services attempt to minimise and remove barriers to learning and development, they also focus on the prevention of these barriers and on the development of a supportive learning environment for all learners (DNE, 1997:64). We can now include any person or institution, which can provide support in preventing and overcoming barriers to learning and development. In other words, people from the community around the centre of learning or the learner's home can become members of the team working together with the learner towards achievement of his goals.

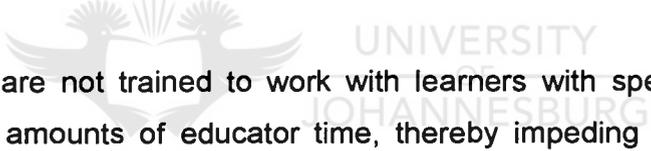
Previously in a traditional setting, one teacher would take responsibility for the entire class. Any consultation with governing bodies or other specialists had to take place outside the classroom once the lessons had been completed and the learners were not around. Should a learner need to be given extra help of whatever description (extra maths or speech therapy, for example) the expert (e.g. the therapist or psychologist) would remove the learner from the classroom and take him\her somewhere else, separated from the rest of the learners. There are big differences today. One of the reasons for this is that inclusion, a grassroots movement driven by parental dissatisfaction with the current delivery system and the belief that all learners should be educated together, has captured the attention of teachers and the general public alike. As a result, all learners, regardless of barriers experienced are now entitled to a free and appropriate education and instead of just one educator, there is now a team of involved people working together.

Overcoming barriers to learning and development in inclusive settings is a complicated task that cannot be accomplished by just one person. Inclusive education happens when a team of people who support one another agree to provide the best activities for all learners. More than any other element, the need for a team effort to manage, deliver and support a learner's inclusive education is a drastic change for regular teachers. How that team worked has changed over time.

The pattern has changed from a multidisciplinary approach, to an interdisciplinary approach and finally to the transdisciplinary approach which should be used today (Alper, Schloss, Etscheidt & Macfarlane, 1995:19). Initially, teams followed a multidisciplinary approach. Using a medical model or clinical model to guide the service delivery, each team individually evaluated a learner, designed a prescriptive programme and implemented that programme. Team members knew that other professionals were involved in the learner's education but rarely interacted with each other and seldom shared information.

With the Interdisciplinary approach, therapy was geared towards functional skills and was less fragmented. Interactions with fellow team members became more important. Each team member shared information and suggested strategies for incorporating important goals and objectives. Even though therapy might have taken place in the classroom within the context of functional skill acquisition, team members still delivered services to the learner individually.

With the transdisciplinary approach, the entire team focuses its efforts on the learner and his family. Team members share specialised information and work on functional skills. However, they now emphasise blending learning support into a consolidated programme based on natural routines that exist within the learner's environments. Team members have to realise that the roles they play in this process will now be more flexible. They will be expected to learn more about what they are doing through reading, attending workshops and also learn from one another. It is really important that each team member makes a commitment to participate fully in the process and to communicate frequently with other members. Advocates of inclusive education have had an uphill battle in South Africa. According to Schoeman (in Newmark & Kachelhoffer, 1997:81) fierce arguments were initially raised in traditional educational circles against the principle of inclusion, such as:

- 
- Regular teachers are not trained to work with learners with special needs and it will require excessive amounts of educator time, thereby impeding the progress of other pupils.
 - Regular teachers and peers have negative attitudes towards pupils with special needs, which will result in the isolation and stigmatisation of learners. This implies change for both practitioners and mainstream teachers.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Taking the above into consideration, it is necessary to determine **“What are the needs of the Centre-of-Learning Based Team in implementing the Policy of Inclusive Education?”**

The following sub-questions can be formulated:

- What is inclusive education?
- What is educational support?

1.4 THE AIM OF THE STUDY

In view of the above mentioned problem statement the aim of this study is:

To explore and describe the needs of the Centre-of-learning-based team in implementing the Policy of Inclusive Education.

The sub-aims are:

- To define the concept inclusive education.
- To discuss the nature of educational support.

1.5 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

For the purpose of clarification it is necessary to discuss some key concepts of this study.

1.5.1 Centre-of-Learning-Based Team

The Educational Support Committee at the school or centre-of-learning is officially known as the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team (CLBT) or even Teacher Support Team. For the purpose of this study the term Centre-of-Learning Based Team and Teacher Support Teams are used interchangeably. It refers to a model of service delivery at a Centre-of-Learning level, which forms the core component of an overall support structure (DNE, 1997:5). According to Brill (in Gulliford & Upton, 1994:142) "A team can be described as a group of people, each of whom possesses particular expertise; each of whom is responsible for making individual decisions; who together hold a common purpose; who meet together to communicate, collaborate and consolidate knowledge, from which plans are made, actions determined and future decisions influenced". Such a team\committee may be made up of teachers, learners, parents and community members as well as education support personnel. Its primary function would be to support the learning process by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development. This study focuses on the school as a Centre-of-Learning and therefore the term teacher will be used instead of the broader term educator.

1.5.2 Inclusive Education

This term refers to a broad philosophical and principled position in relation to the educational rights of all learners. It can be defined as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners. In South Africa, inclusive education relates to the Bill of Rights, which protects all learners from discrimination, including but not only, those with special needs. It commits us to creating access to and provision of a process of education which is appropriate to the needs of all learners, whatever their origin, background or circumstances (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:20).

“Inclusive education is a process by which a school attempts to respond to all learners as individuals by reconsidering its learning provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all learners from the local community who wish to attend, and in so doing, reduces the need to exclude learners” (Sebba & Ainscow, 1996:9).

1.5.3 Inclusion

Inclusion is the provision of services to all learners to overcome barriers to learning and development, in the neighbourhood school, in age-appropriate education classes, with necessary support services to assure the learner's success academically, socially and behaviourally in order to prepare the learner to participate as a full and contributing member of society (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996:762).

Inclusion refers to an educational policy, which must flow from the position of inclusive education. Such a policy must ensure that the full variety of educational needs is optimally accommodated and “included” in the education system. This may involve different ways of meeting special needs. But the emphasis falls on the system meeting the needs of the learner as “normally” and inclusively as possible, rather than the learner having to be separated or excluded to suit the needs of the system (Donald, et al. 1997:20). Inclusion is therefore aimed at ensuring that all learners have equal access to education which will equip them for life as part of that community and which will help develop their potential. This implies restructuring of schools to meet the needs of all learners (Burden, 1995:55).

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research design and methods used will now briefly be discussed. A detailed discussion of the design and methods will follow in chapter three.

1.6.1 The Research Design

“The nature and data and the problem for the research dictate the research methodology. If the data is verbal, the methodology is qualitative” (Leedy, 1997:139). This research project is conducted within the realm of qualitative research, which can be further described as exploratory, descriptive and interpretative. The participants in this study include teachers and parents from a school in Soweto where they are members of a Centre-of -Learning-Based Team.

1.6.2 Data Collection Methods

The idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select participants that will best answer the research question (Creswell, 1994:148). The methods used in collecting data were a literature review, field notes and focus group interviews. According to Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Shaw (1995: 275) the focus group is a discussion-based interview that produces a particular type of qualitative data. A focus group is a discussion in which a small number (between 6 and 12) of respondents, under the guidance of a moderator talk about topics that are believed to be of special importance to the investigator. The field notes were only analysed as supportive data.

1.6.3 Data Analysis

Merriam (in Creswell, 1994:166) contends that data collection and data analysis in qualitative research must be a simultaneous process. In this study the data reduction process was achieved by clustering, conceptualising and dendrograming. The focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim and the categories that emerged were reduced to the final themes. The main themes are presented in Chapter Four section 4.4.

1.7 COURSE OF THE STUDY

The following is a brief outline the course of this study will take:

| | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| Chapter One | : | Context of the study |
| Chapter Two | : | Theoretical Framework. |
| Chapter Three | : | Research Design. |
| Chapter Four | : | The Presentation and Interpretation of the data of the study, conclusions and suggestions. |

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the background of the problem, the research problem as well as the aim of the study. This was followed by a discussion of the research methodology together with the proposed methods of data collection and analysis and finally, definition of central concepts were presented.



CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African community is currently faced with the challenge of implementing a unitary education system based on equity. This is reflected in the new constitution, which emphasizes respect for the rights of all, with particular emphasis on the recognition of diversity. The new Education system advocates an inclusive approach to education where all learners are entitled to appropriate education. This chapter will initially focus on a brief discussion of the history of education in South Africa, specifically inclusive education, as well as internationally. This will be followed more specifically by a discussion on the support in schools by means of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams.

2.2 THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Education in South Africa is currently going through social and political upheavals. Apartheid, which has dominated South Africa for decades, with its effect on the educational system, is beginning to crumble. Nevertheless, the negative effects of apartheid and apartheid education are incalculable and will persist long after the demise of the system (Green, 1991: 13). According to the current minister of education, Professor Kader Asmal, the worst effects of apartheid were on education, particularly since education has so many different purposes, ranging from education for citizenship, education for culture, education for freedom and to education for economic development (The Star, 1999:19).

Historically, education in South Africa has been provided on a segregated manner based on race and economic production. The ANC Discussion Document (1994:104) reiterates this statement when it states "special educational needs have been marginalised in mainstream education, and provision is fragmented. Special education and guidance and counselling services are administered by numerous racially and ethnically segregated education departments and there is no coherent national policy". Donald (1993:141) therefore states that in South Africa, because of conditions of widespread social and educational disadvantage, specialised education needs to be seen as being both intrinsically and extrinsically generated. He observes that "the number of children with intrinsic, physical, cognitive or emotional disabilities- and hence special educational need is thus not small but

may constitute a significant proportion of the school age population. In addition, the heritage of social and educational disadvantaged has created what appears to be a very large group of children with extrinsically generated special educational need". In support of the above statement, he cites statistics on special educational needs revealed in 1990:

- For every 100 children estimated to have special educational needs, 89 are African
- Possibly 90% of children with special educational needs have been doubly disadvantaged in that they may have been structurally excluded from quality education and also because special educational needs has always been on the periphery of consideration of educational provision.

Furthermore, teaching methods used in black and white schools differed. The teaching process in most black schools emphasised chalk-and-talk methods, leading inevitably to a reliance on rote learning (Donald & Hlongwane, 1989:124). This means that black schools were forced to neglect the development of mental abilities, promotion of reasoning and problem-solving powers or creative imagination. On the other hand, the teaching processes in white schools were designed to enable these learners to exercise sound judgement and to sharpen their critical faculties (Van Vuuren, Wiehahn, Lombard & Rhodie, 1985:35). There was also a chronic overcrowding in black schools. The teacher- pupil ratio for example, was about 1:15 for whites. Estimates for blacks ranged from 1:60 (Green, 1991:12). According to Skuy and Partington (1990:151), all fourteen white universities offered higher specialised degree and diploma programmes in different areas of special education, these areas included disabilities, mental retardation, visual handicaps and behaviour disorders. On the other hand, segregated black universities offered no teacher-training specialisation in special education. They cite the main reason for this situation as the deliberate attempt by proponents of the apartheid philosophy to neglect black education and thus, this served to maintain and perpetuate inequalities. According to Professor Asmal 60% of our teachers are not qualified as a result of apartheid education (The Star, 1999:19).

Under South Africa's apartheid system, special education services were offered on a racially segregated basis. With regard to Black children in particular, Gwala-Ogisi (in Nkomo, 1990: 276) notes that Black children are the least provided for in special education. This is despite the fact that because of apartheid policies Black children have tended to be more exposed to conditions of poverty and health-related deficits which would have made them more vulnerable to risks that could lead to scholastic problems.

Taking into consideration the imbalances that occurred during the apartheid era, it is therefore not surprising that the restructuring and redesigning of education, including the movement away from segregated settings for learners with special needs, to the provision of education for all learners in an inclusive and supportive learning environment, have been received with misgiving by some people (Engelbrecht, 1999:3). Clark, Dyson and Millward, (1995: vii) argues that the inclusive education movement has tended to advocate solutions that neglect the complexities and contradictions in the field. These complexities in the South African context include the fact that inclusion has, to a large extent, not been a question of choice but an issue of necessity.

2.3 INCLUSION

According to Jenkins and Sileo (1994:84) many people in all walks of life use the term "inclusion". In the education context it is used to mean that learners who were previously taught in special schools are allowed to go to any centre of learning and attend classes with their peers. In other words, those learners who were previously excluded from the schools in the mainstream are now included. It is, however, more than just a matter of placement and schooling, it is a completely new way of looking at the education for all learners, irrespective of race, class, culture, ability, gender or sexual preference (DNE, 1997:34). Very specific principles are underlying this approach and are usually built into a Bill of Rights as well as into governmental policies of a specific country. The main thrust behind inclusion is a very specific attitude towards the norms society uses when evaluating the worth of a human being. It has to do with certain value systems (beliefs) which form the foundation of the inclusive philosophy (Hilton & Smith, 1994:253).

The philosophy of inclusion states that everyone, including people with disabilities, form part of the "normal" society. In this way, the word is given a new meaning where the learners with disabilities can be said to be normal because they also have a variety of abilities which make them part of society. If one looks at it in this way, a society that excludes any of its people is actually disabled because it does not use appropriate standards when acknowledging and accommodating the wide range of abilities amongst its members. In a sense this is a fairly new and very popular approach that is followed in quite a few countries (Burden, 1995:46). It is one of many approaches, which can help to promote an inclusive society where differences are respected and valued unconditionally. Furthermore, discrimination is actively discouraged in policies, institutions and behaviours in an inclusive society.

The term mainstreaming is often used as having the same meaning as inclusion. The differences are very subtle and not always clear-cut because the world is slowly moving from one paradigm to another, and in practice, more than one paradigm is sometimes adhered to. Burden (1995:47) states that the reason for trying to point out the differences is thus to emphasise clearly that there has been a slow mindshift over the years and that inclusion is in fact not "traditional" mainstreaming in a new attire, cleansed of its medical or clinical remnants, or a mere continuation of mainstream options. Therefore, she supports Salisbury (1991:146) in stating that it is essential to discuss the conceptual difference between mainstreaming, integration and inclusion.

Mainstreaming is seen as providing for "identified individuals designated as handicapped whatever it takes by way of additional services and resources to enable the learner (because of his or her characteristics and deficit) to receive appropriate educational and related experiences in the context of the least restrictive environment" (Kriegler & Farman, 1996:42). This suggests that we must help the one who does not fit in to eventually fit in. In other words that person must be changed by use of certain strategies in order to conform to certain standards.

Integration on the other hand, involves focusing on an individual or small group of pupils for whom the curriculum is adapted, different work is devised or support assistants are provided (Ainscow & Sebba, 1996:9). They believe that integration does not necessarily challenge or alter in any way the organisation and provision of the curriculum for all learners.

Finally inclusion, according to Udvari-Solner and Thousand (1996:147), describes the process by which a centre-of-learning attempts to respond to all learners as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organisation and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all learners from the local community who wish to attend, and in so doing, reduces the need to exclude learners. Inclusion does not focus on the disability and how to rehabilitate it like mainstreaming, but attempts to change to a system that accommodates and celebrates diversity. Therefore, the responsibility should be on centres of learning to create conducive learning environments for learners who experience barriers to learning and development (DNE, 1997).

The important difference between mainstreaming, integration and inclusion as defined internationally, is that in mainstreaming and integration in order for the process to be effective, the learners have to adapt, whereas, in inclusion the schools themselves have to

change in order to accommodate the needs of the learner. Inclusion wants the programme to fit the learner rather than the learner to fit the programme.

The concept of inclusion in education operates within the framework of a “rights” approach which emphasises that all learners have a right to access education (hence the slogan “education for all”) and focuses particularly on those learners who have been excluded from the regular schooling system or the education system as a whole (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 1999:47).

A holistic view of inclusion would entail the following characteristics suggested by Ballard (in Clark, et al. 1995:1-3):

- Inclusiveness sees differences as an ordinary part of human experience to be valued and organised for;
- Inclusive arrangements create disability as an experience to be addressed within the context of diversity, and
- Inclusiveness emphasises equity in human relationships.

According to Ainscow (in Clark, et al. 1995:68) quality of participation should be such that the learners feel as active participants rather than recipients in the inclusion process and also notes that involvement of learners, parents and members of the community leads to the creation of positive relationships that helps to create a climate which is conducive to positive learning.

2.3.1 Historical Development and Current International Perspectives of Inclusion

2.3.1.1 International Perspective

According to Cartwright, Cartwright and Ward (1995:19) from the early 1800s to the present day, groups of concerned parents and others have lamented and protested the sometimes inhumane treatment of children and adults labelled as insane or retarded. Eventually, provision of care and education for all citizens with disabilities became legal issues. The efforts of parent groups and professional groups, combined with the work of lawyers, turned the issues of appropriate care for and education of individuals with disabilities into civil rights issues. The lawsuits (litigation) and laws (legislation) have changed the way the world deals with children and adults who have disabilities with respect to education. These laws ensure

that all children and youth with disabilities will be given free, appropriate public education; that such an education will be individually prescribed; and that they will be educated in as normal an environment as possible.

According to Gulliford and Upton (1994:54) the term Special Educational Needs came into use in the late 1960's as a result of increasing dissatisfaction with the terminology being used at the time, categorising handicapped learners and indicating that there were two types of children: the handicapped and the not handicapped. In 1978 the Warnock Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People in the United Kingdom, recommended Special Educational Needs be used, meant not simply in terms of disability but in relation to everything about the learner, all the complexities of individual needs, abilities and disabilities.

The idea of inclusion was historically introduced by inter alia the Jerusalem Right in 1967. The policies of normalisation and integration originated in Sweden and other countries. Terms like "mainstreaming" and "least restrictive environment" were used at the time. It was then still believed that it was people with disabilities who had problems within themselves and that could be changed by following certain techniques and/or strategies so as to fit in with or be made acceptable to the mainstream of society. Society was sensitised to have respect for them as human beings and accept them as far as was possible. Therefore discoveries in the different scientific fields (medicine, psychology, etc.) were put to use to help people with disabilities, in a very specialised manner, to become as normal as possible. This is often referred to as the medical or clinical approach and is still very strongly adhered to in special schools as well as in the mainstream situation today. According to Burden (1995:24), this approach did not always lead to the expected successes and the lack of success slowly led to a paradigm shift, the development of the notion of inclusion. In truth, **inclusion is a radical way of looking at education in general, not only the education of people with disabilities but of all learners.**

As is the case with all approaches to understanding and regulating human behaviour, the inclusionary approach too has a very specific origin. It developed in reaction to those approaches that were believed to be discriminatory towards people who were classified as not "normal" (disabled, disadvantaged).

The "philosophy of inclusion" therefore developed out of a specific historical background in which the eyes of the society were opened to injustice. Recognition of the rights of all

learners, including learners with learning difficulties began to take shape as a social imperative. The period was marked by a significant shift where integration as a belief system came about as a result of merging values and priorities. Communities began looking at reform strategies and policy to address segregated centres of learning and put the vision of unitary education system on the agenda. This took shape in different ways across the different countries, for instance:

- The comprehensive schooling patterns noted in the Scandinavian countries.
- The mainstreaming movement in the USA and Canada in the 1970's where the law legislated that learners with difficulties need to be provided for in the least restrictive environment (Allan & Sprout, 1985:4).
- The introduction of integration in the United Kingdom.
- The Warnock Report (UK: 1978\82) which stressed the central issue that all learners have special needs.
- The Whole School movement or Regular Initiative Movement, which resulted from dissatisfaction with the slow progress towards integration. This movement called for a merger of special and regular education.
- Jomtien World Conference of Education for All (1990) which emphasised the inherent right of all learners to primary education, taking into account individual differences and needs of each learner, and to developing learner-centred education which addresses the specific needs of each individual learner.
- The Salamanca Statement (Ainscow, 1995:4) on principles, policies and practice in Special Needs Education. This International Conference called for all those concerned with education, "to endorse the approach of inclusive schooling and to support the development of special needs education as an integral part of all education programmes".
- Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Schoeman, 1996:1). These rules, which have their origin in the United Nation's World Programme of Action concerning disabled persons, provides guidelines for minimum standards which must be met for equal opportunities to be created for all people with disabilities in the society.

Ainscow (1995:5-6) highlights current trends that have shaped the developments regarding inclusion of learners with learning difficulties. These include the following:

- Handicapping conditions go beyond the system of categorisation based on the medical model.
- Learning difficulties of learners can arise both from individual characteristics as well as disadvantaged circumstances of the learner.
- The recognition of a continuum of needs rather than strict categories between “handicapped” and “normal”.
- The issue of rights, namely: parental rights in relation to their child and that these need to be respected; the learner’s right to lead as normal a life as possible coupled with provision of equal access to education for every learner.

2.3.1.2 The South African Perspective of Inclusion

According to Engelbrecht, et al. (1999:12) “both international and national patterns and trends regarding disability have undergone major shifts which have influenced the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa to a large extent”. South Africa has never truly had a national system of education and training. For the first time in South Africa’s history, a government has the mandate to plan the development of the education and training system for the benefit of the country as a whole and all its people. This implies that the system must change to accommodate all learners, as the constitution guarantees equal education rights for all learners. Education for all does not have to imply the lowering of standards. On the contrary, it is about good and effective teaching. An effective teacher knows and understands the diversities and the needs of his/her learners and adapts his/her instruction and classroom management accordingly.

In South Africa the movement towards inclusive education has been complicated by the segregation of learners with special educational needs, learners in mainstream education, and also by the segregation of races into different systems. As a heritage from the apartheid past, what we have at present is a totally inadequate and divided system of meeting the needs of learners with individual disabilities and difficulties in learning (Du Toit, 1996:15). On the one hand, special educational services have quite widely developed in those departments, which used to serve whites, coloureds and Indians -roughly 20 per cent of the school-going population. But the objective or model, of these services has mainly been on separating learners with special needs from the mainstream and educating them in special schools or classes (Donald, et al. 1997:237).

Initially, separate schools were established for learners who were deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted, epileptic, cerebral palsied and physically disabled. Further investigations as to learners with specific disabilities followed, such as committees of inquiry into the education of learners with minimal brain dysfunction (1969), autistic learners (1971) and severely mentally handicapped learners (1974). In all these cases, special schools for learners with such disabilities followed. The education of the severely mentally handicapped required the passing of a special Act, as the previous Acts specified that only learners regarded as “educable” could qualify for special education. In terms of the Mentally Retarded Children’s Training Act, 1974, schools for severely mentally handicapped learners were established and were called training centers, as they are known in England (Du Toit, 1996:10).

Du Toit (1996:11) goes on to state further that as the previous Act on specialised education could not accommodate all categories of learners with disabilities, the Education Affairs Act was promulgated in 1988. Reference was no longer made to the educability of the learner. Training centres for the mentally handicapped were now to be regarded as “schools”.

In the interim, African children were still not entitled to free and compulsory education. Special schools for them were established and run by missions, notably those of the Roman Catholic and Dutch Reformed churches (Behr, in Du Toit, 1996:16). However, while remarkable strides were being made in the provision of special education for whites, educational provision for learners with disabilities from other population groups developed much more slowly, leading to severe discrepancies in both the quality and quantity of such provision.

Allan and Sprout (1985:7) states that the implementation of (new) educational philosophy and practice places new stresses and strains on the centres of learning and this statement is supported by Long (1995:26) when he points out that there are individuals who perceive inclusion as a “top-down decision”, that is in addition to the pressures of dealing with culturally diverse learners in the classroom. Some of these individuals are teachers, parents and learners. Teachers would experience these pressures as feelings of resentment resulting from having to educate learners they are not trained for. There is still a large majority of parents who have never heard the term “inclusive education” nor have little or no idea of what it entails. Of those who have been exposed to the debate around inclusion, integration or mainstreaming, opinions remain sharply divided, as they are worldwide. Many parents in disadvantaged areas, which had no special schools, are suspicious of the

motives of those who argue that special schools are not necessarily the best option. They feel that they will be deprived of the facilities that they were denied in the past. Meanwhile, learner's experience of the pressure of inclusion can manifest in negative attitudes that may lead to apprehension and strife between learners with and learners without barriers to learning. Furthermore, the awareness by learners with barriers to learning that they are perceived as being 'different' may complicate into emotional and further behaviour difficulties (Long, 1995:26).

Du Toit (1996:22) points out that since the first democratic elections for all South African citizens in April 1994, a general feeling of optimism and a common commitment to improving the quality of life of all South Africans has swept the country. In a spirit of democratic decision-making, policy-makers, professionals, teachers, parents and the people with disabilities themselves are meeting to plan the future of education together. The White Paper on Education and Training in Democratic South Africa : First steps to develop a new system, February 1995, serves as the first policy document on education and training by South Africa's new democratically elected government. Then, in 1996, the new Ministry of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of "special needs and support services" in education and training in South Africa. According to the Government Notice No. 16874, the NCSNET and NCESS had to take into "consideration the Constitution, all relevant submissions contributed towards the formulation of the White Paper on Education and submissions made by national and international specialists and organisation such as UNESCO, inputs from the national and provincial government departments with line functions (e.g. Education, Welfare, Health and Labour)" (Engelbrecht, et al. 1999:16).

The White Paper on Education and Training (DNE, 1995:4) formulated four key areas of concern, which have informed the vision and principles of the NCSNET\ NCESS. These are: that the goal of education and training policy should be to ensure that all learners and adults, have access to a lifelong learning process; to recognise that in South Africa massive inequalities have existed in the past in the provision of education, and that central to policy development and planning is the need to redress these inequalities; that all state resources must be provided according to the principle of equality so that all learners have access to equal educational opportunities; and to ensure that the provision for education is of good quality.

The Green Paper on an integrated National Disability Strategy for South Africa (1995) reflects clearly how people with disabilities in our country have been severely marginalized in the past and have been denied fundamental rights such as education and employment (DNE, 1995). However, inclusion is not simply about reconstructing provision for learners with disabilities, but is a means of extending educational opportunities to a wide range of marginalized groups who may historically have had little or no access to schooling (Dyson & Forlin, 1999:32).

Schoeman (1996:2) states that "it is recognised in South Africa that the existing curriculum contributes to the current failure of many learners. This is done either by making inappropriate educational provision for learners or by excluding them from schooling entirely". If learners are to be helped, integrated planning is essential. According to the White Paper on Education and Training (DNE, 1995:15) an integrated approach to education and training implies a view of learning which rejects a rigid division between 'academic' and 'applied', 'theory' and 'practice', 'knowledge' and 'skill', 'head' and 'hand'. Such divisions have characterised the organisation of curricula and the distribution of educational opportunity in many countries of the world, including South Africa. They have grown out of, and helped to reproduce very old occupational and social class distinctions. In South Africa such distinctions in curriculum and career choice have also been closely associated in the past with the ethnic structure of economic opportunity and power (Government Gazette, 1995:15).

The South African Schools Act (1996) identifies certain values and principles, which should direct national policy for the reconstruction and development of education (DNE, 1997:43). They include the following:

- The basic right to education, irrespective of race, class, gender, creed or age
- Lifelong education and training of good quality
- Open access to education
- Redress of educational inequalities
- A unitary education system
- The total development of all learners, which will encompass academic and vocational as well as broad psychological health and social needs.

One of the key features of the South African Schools Act (1996) is the assertion of the right of equal access to basic and quality education for all learners without discrimination of any

sort. This then means no learner may therefore be denied admission to an ordinary school on any grounds of disability, language or learning difficulty. This is the first step towards a single inclusive education system in South Africa. The South African Schools Act of 1996 includes the constitutional right to equal access, the right to claim learning support so as to access the curriculum, and the right of parents to choose. This implies that compulsory exclusion of any learner has effectively been abolished.

Furthermore the new curriculum, namely Curriculum 2005 expects teachers in South African classrooms to accommodate learner diversity. Inclusive education is the ultimate acceptance of diversity. It places the major responsibility for meeting special educational needs on the shoulders of mainstream teachers rather than special education teachers, although it accepts the necessity for separate provision for a small proportion of learners. The curriculum that is envisaged is aimed at focusing on the active participation of learners and the outcomes thereof. The most important thing to do is to move away from rote learning to learner centred learning and this can be achieved through outcomes based education (Asmal, 1999: 19).

A new approach to education and training in South Africa has therefore been adopted in a national education policy. Its main goal is for all learners at all levels of education to have access to, value and succeed in lifelong education and training of good quality. The approach which has been introduced in education and training to achieve this goal is referred to as Outcomes Based Education and Training. The emphasis is on the achievement of outcomes and on the application of learning. It therefore, provides a framework for learning and teaching which can respond effectively to a diverse range of learner needs (DNE, 1997). The outcomes based approach to education and training has been developed into a new curriculum framework for learning at school level. This framework is referred to as Curriculum 2005 and was launched by the National Department of Education in April 1997 and it was phased in, in January 1998 (DNE, 1997:73). Curriculum 2005 reflects a paradigm shift in the South African education system, from the previous emphasis on content to a focus on outcomes. One of the central recommendations of the NCSNET/NCESS report is that there needs to be flexibility regarding the teaching and learning process. This means that all aspects of the curriculum need to be developed to ensure that the diverse needs of the learner population are addressed (Lazarus, et al. 1999:51).

The philosophy of OBE provides for an environment, in which diversity can flourish, where understanding of and sensitivity to difference in terms of race, language, religious beliefs and appearance can be developed. The Ministry believes that the development of an integrated and community based support system is central to an education system which accommodates and addresses diversity. The Ministry therefore supports the aims and principles of such a support system and the two-prong, three-tier 'cascading' approach to this support promoted by the NCSNET\NCESS (Lazarus, et al. 1999:52). A two-prong approach should be in place to:

- Facilitate curriculum and institutional transformation, and
- Provide additional support to ensure responsiveness to diversity and to address barriers to learning and development-at all levels of education.

The three-tier support system comprises:

- The national and provincial department having sufficient knowledge to accommodate diverse needs and address barriers to learning and development
- The district support teams having the responsibility of building the capacity of sites of learning to address barriers to learning and development
- Site-based support teams (Centre-of-Learning-Based Team) will identify and address barriers to learning and development. The following section will focus on the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team, which is the main focus of this research.

2.4 CENTRE-OF-LEARNING-BASED TEAMS

In South Africa, the Ministry believes that the core component of the support system should be situated within each site of learning. A Centre-of-Learning-Based Team developed for the particular purpose of providing within a particular learning context is a method that has proved to be successful within many countries, including many parts of South Africa (DNE, 1998:35). The Centre-of-Learning-Based Team refers to a model of service at a centre-of-learning level, which forms the core component of an overall support structure. Such a team may be made up of teachers, learners, parents and community members as well as education support personnel from the district level. Such a team should contain the minimum competencies required by the centre of learning to ensure that the needs of all learners and the system are met (DNE, 1998:36).

The key component of an overall support structure should be a Centre-of-Learning-Based Team. According to the DNE (1998:37) report, many different models already exist for the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team. Each centre will have to choose a model, which responds to its unique circumstances. Teachers within the Centres-of-Learning will make up the bulk of these teams. Teams should, however, be flexible to cater for different needs at different times. The primary functions of these teams would be to support the learning and development process by addressing both individual learners and system needs. Systems could include teacher development and support, learning programme assessment and capacity building at local community level. Where appropriate and available, the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team could be strengthened by expertise from the community and district level services. Although there will be a role for external facilitators and consultants, there is an expectation that teachers, learners and parents will be instrumental in identifying their own needs and resources.

The concept of the Centre-of-Learning-Based support team is not new in South African schools, although they have been called various names such as Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT's) which originated in the USA and their equivalent, Didactic Assistance Teams (DAT's), have been effectively established in some departments following the HSRC report on Children with Special Educational Needs. Panels for Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance (PIDAS) have been less effectively established in other education departments in South Africa (Donald & Hlongwane, 1989:121).

In some schools in South Africa, various forms of teacher support or teaching assistance teams have been developed to assist the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in addressing problems. Historically, however, most of the focus has been on addressing pressing problems rather than providing relevant teacher and parent training support and specific curriculum development projects. A major challenge facing the team is that of assisting the school as a whole, that is, the entire school community, including parents and the surrounding community. The primary functions of these Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams are to support the teaching and learning process at the site of learning by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development.

Traditionally, parents have had a passive role in the assessment of their children's disabilities and difficulties and a limited role in the intervention process. They were provided with results and diagnoses and then expected to follow recommendations made by the experts. The relative lack of acknowledgement had affected the parent's perception of their

control over life events (DNE, 1997:102). Parent disempowerment in the education of their children is a major issue in South Africa and needs to be addressed. Most parents have been historically marginalised in the education system. A shift in the attitudes of parents and the centre-of-learning and education support personnel is necessary. Therefore, the change of government in 1994 has resulted in a new Constitution guaranteeing the right of equal access to education for all learners, as well as the NCSNET/NCESS report that recommended a single education system for all learners. These and other factors have provided parents with a sound platform for pursuing the struggle for equal access for their children with special educational needs. Parent involvement in the political campaign for inclusion has been a very influential factor. According to the NCSNET/NCESS report (1997:102) parents should be empowered and equipped with necessary skills to enable them to:

- facilitate learning at home from a very young age;
- make informed decisions, for example, early intervention programmes;
- participate actively in the learning of their children by participating in school governance and supporting the child after school;
- become change agents and effective advocates in the struggle for the rights of all children;
- participate in development of programmes for teachers; and
- participate in policy development, assessment and monitoring of equity in education.

Therefore, it is essential that parents and teachers should bring the strength of their differences to the joint task of the learner's education. Parents should be involved in planning and local policy making (e.g. through school governing bodies), in the teaching and learning process itself, and in the development of a supportive learning environment for their children (DNE, 1997:102).

The importance of service integration is also emphasized in that it should ensure that issues of physical, social, psychological, scholastic and vocational development are not separated and dealt with through divided services and departments. This means that intersectoral collaborative and team approaches would have to be built up at all levels. It should include the formation of Centres-of-Learning-Based Teams in schools, intersectoral collaboration at community centre and broader levels, as well as the participation of parents, learners and community workers whenever possible and appropriate. According to Stager, *et al.* (1990:6) the task of the centre-of-learning based team to accommodate individual differences in

learners is an enormous challenge. Parents, learners, teachers and administrators must have support mechanisms available within each centre of learning on which to base the decisions that need to be made for each learner. Effective vehicles that can be used to identify and support regular education services required by learners include the establishment of building Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams. Research conducted by Stager, et al. (1990:6) clearly indicates that such teams have the following key benefits:

- Regular education instructional programs within a centre of learning accommodates the broad range of learners abilities and interests;
- A structured support/assistance system is created for teachers;
- Learners competence in basic skills is promoted by helping teachers vary their instructional strategies;
- Inappropriate special education evaluation requests are reduced;
- Parents, teachers, administrators and learners enjoy a sense of mutual involvement in problem-solving around critical learners needs; and
- Teachers realize professional growth through suggestions from and interaction with the team.

Chalfant, Van Dusen Pysh and Moutrie (1989:89) believe that ongoing training and technical assistance provide teams with fresh perspectives and contribute to team longevity. Once established, school based teams can serve as a practical and continuous in-service process which is far more effective than a 'single shot workshop'. Research conducted in America according to Chalfant and Van Dusen Pysh (1989:94) where Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams were implemented 10 years ago, has shown that teams helped teachers, parents and learners to achieve the following outcomes:

- 63,5% of the learners problems were successfully resolved;
- This resulted in fewer referrals making it possible for special education personnel to allocate their time to the more serious cases;
- Providing moral support and reinforcement to teachers;
- Improving teacher performance and behaviour as a result of their intervention;
- Enhancing communication among teachers;
- Improving skills and providing comfort though the analysing and understanding of classroom problems;
- Assisting in expediting the referral processes;
- Supporting teachers in their efforts to individualise instruction in the general classroom;

- Improving work habits, interpersonal behaviours and attention deficiencies;
- Generating intervention strategies that take multiple problems into account; and
- Bringing about teachers sharing their expertise, consulting with one another and benefiting from one another's experience and areas of speciality.

The transformation of Education in South Africa in terms of "special needs" and support services more specifically, is reflected in some attempts to devolve much of the control and responsibility to the lowest level, for example, the development of district support teams, and Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams; and facilitation of the involvement of key stakeholders in various ways in the governance of centres of learning (DNE, 1997:55). The establishment of Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams for the provision of support, problem solving for teachers, more effective service delivery of special help to learners, and as an important advocate for change, has become necessary as a vehicle through which the transition can be supported.

According to the DNE (1997:58), support services should move away from only supporting individual learners to supporting teachers and the system so that they can recognise and respond appropriately to the needs of all learners and thereby promote effective learning. In order for this to happen, the ability to address diversity and minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development must be structured into the system and be integral to its development. The practical implications are on developing capacity of relevant sections of the education system to respond to diversity and provide a supportive learning environment for all learners. Special needs and support services would therefore be infused in the system of education. Therefore, competencies required in each section would include:

- The capacity of relevant sections of the education system to respond to diversity and provide a supportive learning environment for all learners.
- Knowledge and understanding of what barriers to learning and development involve and how they should be addressed.
- Knowledge of teaching and learning relating to particular needs of learners with disabilities.
- Knowledge of how to develop the capacity of the system at all levels to address diversity and barriers to learning and development to ensure effective learning for all.
- Knowledge of the full range of support services that could be accessed to provide support to learners and the system.

- Trainee and practising teachers as well as education support personnel at all levels of education should reflect critically on their practice methods and roles in terms of developing an inclusive education system.
- Training and retraining of teachers in such a way that it does not alienate or threaten teachers but draws on their strengths.
- Teachers skilled to accommodate different learning styles and rates of learning.
- Teachers need to be equipped with skills which plan for the class as a whole; to make use of existing resources, for example, the learners themselves; and to make effective use of innovative strategies (DNE, 1997:59).

Every section of the department would have to ensure that within their ranks they have the competencies required to ensure the inclusion of issues pertaining to diversity and barriers to learning and development. Education support personnel would have central roles to play in training and supporting centre-based teachers to understand and intervene directly in cases that would previously have been referred to them and will also help in developing skills in how to access community support. This would reflect a growing symbiotic relationship between centres of learning and local communities in South Africa.

It is clear that people working in collaborative teams can accomplish much more than individuals on their own. Establishing a team within a particular centre of learning enables the team to address needs specific to that particular centre of learning and the community around it. The team can, through collaborative consultation that is problem solving orientated, bring about changes to the curriculum, create a positive and caring educational environment. This brings about whole school development and reform, thus empowering students, parents and teachers to reach their goals (Chalfant and Van Dusen Pysh, 1989:95).

Just as there are characteristics of consultation, Choate (1997:542) states that there are eight factors vital to effective teamwork involving any two or more individuals. Figure 2.1 depicts these factors.

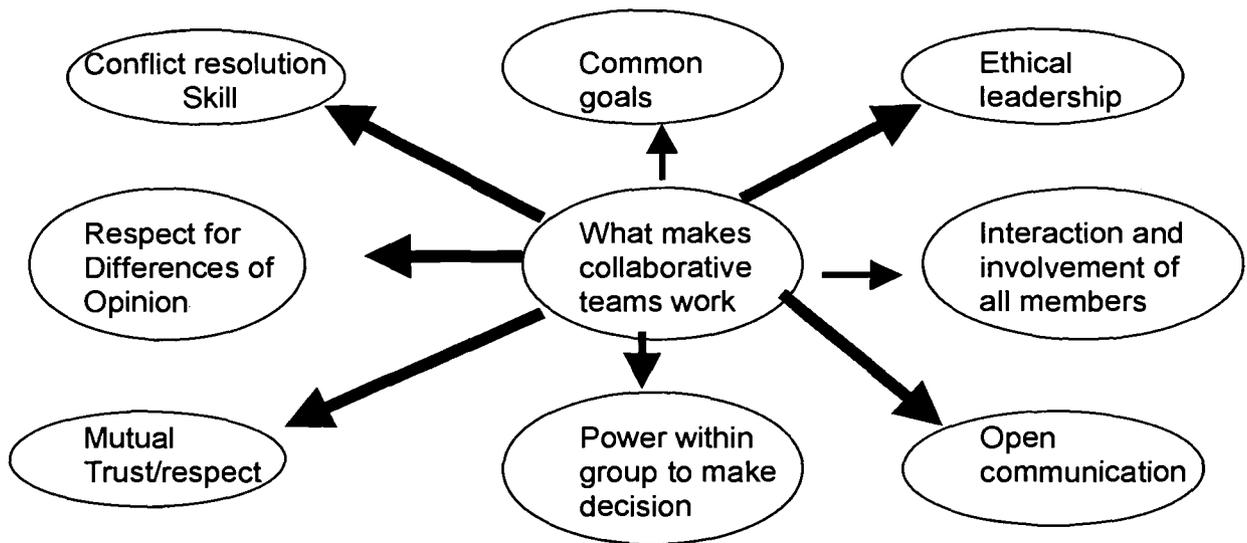


Figure 2.1 Characteristics of Effective Collaborative Teams (Choate, 1997:542)

According to Choate (1997:542) collaborative teams work because:

- Team members perceive themselves as united in pursuit of a common goal.
- Those who lead the team are conscious of ethical responsibilities to the learners, families and professionals involved.
- There is parity among team members and all are expected to participate actively.
- Communication is open; team members listen to one another and are comfortable in expressing diverse points of view.
- The team feels empowered to make decisions and to implement their collaborative plans.
- A climate of mutual trust is evident.
- Team members not only respect differences of opinion but value them as essential to teamwork; and
- Instead of avoiding conflict, team members actively negotiate to resolve it.

With collaborative support, teachers are better equipped to meet the needs of learners with disabilities and those at risk in their classrooms. These teams could be strengthened by the inclusion of expertise from local and district communities. This could include: the sharing of human and other resources with other centres-of-learning in the vicinity; drawing on community organisations and other community resources; and drawing on the competencies required from the education support personnel at district level through district support centres or other district channels available. Programmes aimed at the prevention of barriers

to learning and development, and the promotion or development of schools as safe and a supportive learning environments should be pursued through Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams and district programmes (DNE, 1998). Support in this process is imperative.

2.4.1 Support for Teachers in an Inclusive Program

Idol (1997:388) believes that teachers must be supported in a variety of ways if they are to react to inclusion favourably. One very important way is to offer comprehensive professional development opportunities in essential areas such as:

- effective instruction of difficult to teach learners in general education programs;
- collaborative skills in communicating, interacting, problem solving and team decision making;
- key issues in program development and implementation; and
- intra-personal attitudes and beliefs related to inclusion.

An integral part of offering support to teachers is to make a conscious effort to build a truly professional staff. This often means that the entire staff needs to receive training in how to work in collaborate and collegial teams (Idol, 1997:389).

2.4.2 Characteristics of an Effective Centre-of-Learning Based Team

According to Bradley, et al. (1997:105), characteristics of an effective Centre-of-Learning-Based Team should:

- be committed to a common vision;
- accomplish change and improvement in task completion;
- communicate personal feelings and attitudes to improve team functioning;
- share all viewpoints and make decisions;
- recognise that all member's opinions are important;
- accept individual differences, needs, concerns and expectations;
- focus the responsibilities for success on all members;
- encourage individual freedom of expression;
- use the unique talents and abilities of each member;
- face problems and make modifications; and
- handle conflict in a productive fashion.

2.4.3 Responsibilities of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team

According to Stager, Weller and Dunn (1990:5), the Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams are effective vehicles to identify and support regular education services. For instance, in Massachusetts, school committees are responsible for ensuring that all learners and youth receive an education program. To accomplish this work, school committees use a wide array of approaches, which are guided by the unique educational needs of the learner in the district. The unique needs of each learner lie at the heart of all activities undertaken by the teachers.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team there needs to be clarity in terms of its responsibilities (Garnett, 1988:17). These responsibilities include the following:

- To formulate structures within the school that will enable the support system to function effectively and to help teachers in implementing the Policy of Inclusion.
- To guide teachers on how to deal with certain problems.
- To provide class and subject teachers with guidelines for identifying and assisting LSEN in overcoming barriers to learning and development.
- To assist with parental guidance where necessary.
- To take the initiative in involving experts or volunteers from the community in assisting learners who have certain difficulties.

According to Garnett (1988:18), for the above to be effective, all teachers should take the responsibility of identifying and responding to special needs which emerge in their classes. The main conviction must be that special educational needs are the responsibilities of the whole staff and not merely a specially appointed few. The whole school approach is a necessity because it aims at meeting the diverse needs of its learners by utilising all resources of a school to foster the developments of all its learners and empower its teachers. These diverse needs maybe genetic, environmental, social or psychological. Therefore, the school should be viewed as a system (school, learner, teacher, parents, family, home and community) where a change in one part of the system will affect changes in other parts, and in the system as a whole making it impossible to consider intervention in one part without taking the other into consideration. Paul and Epanchin (1982:18) support the above statement when they say a systemic approach to problems is desirable as the

learner is part of the environment and any intervention programme should focus on the interrelationships of the learner, school, family and community.

Lazarus, et al. (1999:53) emphasises the role of parents, volunteers, non-governmental organisations, natural support systems and other community resources in providing support to Centres-of-Learning. Emphasis is also placed on the role of teachers themselves in the process and peer support among learners. Sharing human and material resources between centres of learning is also an important aspect of community support. This means that for effective intersectoral collaboration at district and Centre-of-Learning level, it is important to facilitate a holistic understanding of the problems and challenges, and comprehensive responses to these.

In conclusion, the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team should function as a collaborative, consultation team. The team members should ideally be school based. Support provided indirectly through service delivery to the learner via consultation service to the teacher and the goal of the team is to prevent and resolve teacher and learner's problems by developing and reforming the entire Centre-of-Learning.

2.4.4 Meeting the Challenge

Stager, et al. (1990:7) point out that teacher support teams may be designed in a variety of ways. The most successful assistance team models are those that are developed by regular teachers under the strong leadership of principals and that incorporate the characteristics of the individual centre of learning. The following critical elements, according to Stager, et al. (1990:7), are based on research and current practice, and have been used by successful teams to help teachers manage classrooms with diverse learner needs. By establishing clear policies and procedures with the active involvement of parents, teachers and learners, these policies must ensure that learners with academic, attendance and discipline problems, as well as those at-risk of pregnancy, depression and suicide, peer violence, family violence/abuse and substance abuse, are identified so that they can receive assistance. The Centre-of-Learning-Based Team should create a process whereby teachers with learners who are experiencing academic or emotional difficulties met regularly with a team. For initial implementation of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team, a weekly meeting has proven to be optimal. Teams should be supported by the principal and be comprised of Centre-of-Learning-Based Team which is aware of the problems affecting the learners. Such a team should contain the minimum competencies required by the centre of learning to

ensure that the needs of all learners and the system are met (DNE, 1997:65). They need to communicate the nature of the teacher support team process to parents on a regular basis in a manner that builds alliances through the learners, parent meetings and newsletters. This communication should invite parental input in developing and carrying out strategies. Deadlines for implementing strategies should be set so that their effectiveness can be evaluated. While most learners with disabilities and other needs would be able to be accommodated in ordinary centres of learning, the small percentage who require high levels of support should be accommodated in existing specialised learning contexts. Where learners cannot be accommodated within a school, home-based and community-based programmes should be provided (DNE, 1997:121).

The Centre-of-Learning-Based Team provide all staff with an organised and ongoing in-service training program detailing the purposes, benefits and implementation approach of the teacher support team process and outlining their right to refer learners for special education evaluation. During these sessions, clear information that describes the resources and time allotted to staff for participation in the process, particularly the availability of substitute coverage for teachers attending team meetings, should be provided. It is therefore important to ensure that the Centre-of-Learning- Based Team meet regularly or at teachers request to discuss the following topics: How instructional strategies may be varied to support teachers and learners; how behavioural interventions may be adapted to improve behaviour; and how the school climate could be improved (i.e. respect for cultural diversity, elimination of sexual harassment, creation of structures to resolve conflicts) (Stager, et al. 1990: 8).

Incidentally, provision of support for class teachers engaged in inclusive education is not exclusively the province of professionals. In some Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries parental and community involvement featured strongly as part of the system of support available both to schools and to parents. The following extract comes from the case study report submitted by the United States (Pijl, et al. 1997: 93)

The school organizes foster grandparents, parent volunteer, and peer tutoring programmes which are available to all students. Students with moderate or severe disabilities have a big brother/sister program available on a limited basis, particularly for students labelled severely emotionally disturbed. Parent support groups offer some assistance to

parents of students with moderate and severe disabilities.

Some local business and community organizations have donated equipment for students with severe disabilities. Local religious and athletic organizations offer community recreation programmes, especially for older learners who need career or vocational experiences. The local mental health agency is involved with a few students with moderate and severe disabilities.

Some businesses and business organizations provide opportunities for students with disabilities who are in financial need. In addition, other organizations often provide opportunities for students with moderate and severe disabilities to attend summer camps or local recreation camps, and will under certain conditions purchase or loan to families necessary equipment.

In a vision for the future of an integrated Educational System in South Africa, the Department of Education and Training, calls for a range of services which work together to meet the needs of all learners and other aspects of the system which should be developed. It is important that the development of support services in South Africa embraces community participation through the involvement of various community resources, and relies primarily on community-based approaches. These services should form an integral part of the education system as whole (DNE, 1998:20).

2.4.5 The Team Approach

At all levels- from the National Office to the individual school, an emphasis is placed on support services personnel working in transdisciplinary teams in the planning and, where appropriate, the practice of services. This not only reflects the principle of service integration but also, through ensuring interpersonal communication and practical co-ordination, is a vital way through which the principles of holistic development and curriculum infusion could, in reality, be given effect.

Squelch and Lemmer (1994: 70) state that working in teams have benefits for the individual and the school as a whole. They see the following benefits resulting from effective teamwork:

- Better quality decisions are made.

- People who have learnt to support and trust one another share information instead of keeping it to themselves.
- Resources, special talents and strengths are shared instead of hoarded.
- Pitfalls threatening people who work in isolation are avoided or uncovered by teamwork.
- The morale is higher when people work together.
- Excellence results from teamwork. Everyone wants the team to look good.

Schattman and Benay (1992:23) also supports the argument of Squelch and Lemmer when they state that teams are a powerful tool for problem solving, planning and programme implementation. When a collaborative team approach uses specific problem-solving techniques, solutions to complete issues are more likely. In addition, the quality of outcomes resulting from multiple perspectives is usually greater than those from unilateral efforts.

According to the Proposed Working Document on School Support Systems (DNE, 1997) the calibre of people in the composition of the support committee is crucial for the successful running of the support system. The Centre-of-Learning therefore should identify people who possess the following characteristics:

- knowledge/experience/interest in guidance
- empathy
- caring
- sensitive
- good interpersonal relationships
- communication skills
- integrity
- honesty and
- reliability.



It is therefore important for the team to work towards the same goals and to merge the unique skills of teachers, parents and learners.

2.5. CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is guided by an ethos of support. It is aimed at meeting the needs of learners. This can only be achieved when teachers are ready to work with all learners from whatever backgrounds they come or whatever abilities they may have. This new way of

looking at education and learning calls for a paradigm shift to take place in the minds of not only teachers, but of society as a whole, as it asks society to recognise the individual differences and to acknowledge common humanity and equality. Collaboration between teachers and parents, co-operative learning and teaching, team approaches, joint problem-solving and support is essential in breaking down barriers. Time and support in the process is crucial.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the procedure followed in conducting this study that is aimed at looking at the needs of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in implementing the policy of inclusive education. The research design, methods of data collection including the problem and purpose of research, are discussed. The issues of validity and reliability will be briefly discussed as well as the credibility and ethical considerations of the research inquiry.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design "is a plan for assembling, organizing, and integrating information (data), and its results in a specific end product (research findings). The selection of a particular design is determined by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises, and by the type of end product desired" (Merriam, 1988: 6). The proposed study lends itself best to a qualitative research design as the appropriate mode of enquiry. This is due to the fact that the study aligns itself with some of the characteristics of qualitative research mentioned in various texts including Merriam (1988:18) and Creswell (1994:145).

3.2.1 Characteristics of Research Design

According to various researchers such as Merriam (1988) and Maykut and Morehouse (1994) a research design is regarded as qualitative when the researcher is interested in understanding meaning; the focus is exploratory; it is flexible, evolving and emergent; the setting is natural and familiar to the participants; and finally, a small non-random sample is used. Qualitative research involves a collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual context- that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individual's lives. Creswell (1998:14) states that authors agree that one undertakes qualitative research in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in

language. This research therefore, took place in a natural setting- the school, which is where the teachers as well as the parents meet.

The aim of qualitative research according to Merriam (1988:16-17), is to gain insight into the meaning that people give to experiences in their lives, and how they structure their worlds according to these meanings. This is done by means of what Miles and Huberman (1994:10) refer to as “thick descriptions that are vivid, nested in real context and have a ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader.” The researcher’s reasons for undertaking a qualitative study are as follows:

1. It enables the researcher to study individuals in their natural setting. This involves going out to the setting or field of study, gaining access and gathering material.
2. To emphasize the researcher’s role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participant’s view rather than as an “expert” who passes judgement on participants (Creswell, 1998:18).

In conclusion, the researcher hopes to generate results that are understandable and experientially credible, both to the people she is studying and others.

3.2.2 Context of the Research

Human behaviour and actions never occur in isolation, they always occur within a specific context. This is also supported by Miles and Huberman (1994:10) who believe that each context has a unique situation consisting of a particular time, geographical setting, social and historical situation -all of which impact on both the participants and observer.

This study was carried out within the black township of Diepkloof, situated in the western part of the Gauteng Province in South Africa. The name of the school is Mamello Primary School, which starts from Grade 1 and continues to Grade 4. There are 411 learners and 10 teachers at this school. The teacher-pupil ratio is 1:40. Learners at Mamello Primary School, with or without learning difficulties, are housed at the same school in an inclusive classroom setting. Most of the learners come from Diepkloof with some that are from informal settlements. While Mamello is regarded as urbanised, most of the parents and learners come from poor socio-economic conditions and most of the learner’s parents are unemployed. The school is in the process of implementing inclusive education and the team

has been established but the participants indicated that they are not sure of what is expected of them.

3.2.3 Problem and Purpose

The current focus in education for South African schools is to redress the educational imbalance. The broader problem is therefore that of ensuring quality education which is accessible to learners, specifically in an inclusive schooling environment where teachers and parents have the necessary knowledge and skills. For this purpose the researcher posed the question: What are the needs of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in implementing the policy of inclusive education?

The purpose of the research was two fold:

- To construct a theoretical framework regarding inclusive education.
- To gain greater understanding and insight into what the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team needs are.

3.2.4 Research Methods



Mason (1996:36) states that in qualitative research “the term method is generally meant to imply more than a practical technique or procedure for gaining data. It implies also a data-generation process involving activities which are intellectual, analytical and interpretative”. Furthermore, Miles and Huberman (in Creswell, 1994:147) emphasises that there are four parameters that the researcher needs to take into account, namely the setting, the actors, the events and the process.

The setting for the research was Mamello Primary School, and the actors were the teachers and parents who form part of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team. The events entailed interviewing them about what their needs are in order to implement the policy of inclusive education. The process involved interaction with teachers and parents.

3.2.4.1 Sampling

Miles and Huberman (1994:27) states that qualitative researchers usually work with samples of people situated in their context and studied in-depth. The researcher aims at

using a purposeful sampling in her study because according to Merriam (1988:48), it is based on the assumption that “one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most”. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:64) also point out that qualitative researchers build a sample with the primary goal of “gaining deep understanding of some phenomenon experienced by a carefully selected group of people”.

The sample population of this study consisted of seven teachers as well six parents who are members of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team. The sample population is from Soweto. Focus group interviews were held at the school to gather data.

3.3. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is aimed at describing a particular phenomenon or event and discovering meaning, with the intention of interpreting, theorizing or applying to the field that which has been discovered or described (Merriam, 1988:27). It is not about qualifying results.

A variety of methods of collecting data were used:

3.3.1 The Literature Review

According to Merriam (1988:61), “a literature review interprets and synthesizes what has been researched and published in the area of interest”. It helps to provide the researcher with a foundation as well as a framework of previously published information and opinion on the problem under investigation. Findings of a study can then be interpreted in the light of that which has already been written and researched in the field or area of interest.

The purpose of a literature review is therefore to provide a basis and a background for the study. The aim of the literature review according to Silverman (1993:1) is to “provide a set of explanatory concepts. These concepts offer ways of looking at the world which are essential in defining the research problem... without a theory, there is nothing to research”. The literature review in this study is inductive as opposed to deductive. Merriam (1988:20) states that inductive research seeks to “.... build abstractions, concepts, hypotheses or theories rather than testing existing theory”. As noted in Chapter Two, Inclusive Education in South Africa constitutes a relatively new field. The study seeks to build abstractions and

concepts based on the competencies, roles and functions of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Teams, in order to implement Inclusive Education.

3.3.2 Focus Group Interviews

A focus group session is defined by Folch-Lyon and Trost (1991:444) as a discussion in which a small number (usually 6 to 12) of people, under the guidance of a moderator (in this case it is the researcher), talk about topics that are believed to be of special importance to the investigation. They describe the focus group discussion as follows:

“The discussion is the basis from which information is obtained. It is conducted as an open conversation in which each participant may comment, ask questions of other participants, or respond to comments by others, including the moderator. Interaction among respondents is encouraged to stimulate in-depth discussion of various topics”.

The participants in the focus group are designated “experts” in the area under investigation, thus the format is usually that of an open discussion where the comments, responses and interaction amongst members of a group and the facilitator are encouraged. The role of the researcher was that of a facilitator or moderator and introduced the topic in the form of a question and encouraged the participation and opinions of all members.

The focus group sessions for this research project were conducted with seven teachers as well as six parents. The sessions were held on two separate occasions because parents were only able to attend on a Sunday as most of them are employed. Both interviews were held at the school. A description of the participants is presented in Chapter Four, section 4.2.

The content of the interviews was transcribed verbatim and became a starting point for the analysis of the data for this research.

Examples of the types of questions asked in both focus group sessions are the following:

1. What is your understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education?
2. What is your opinion of Inclusive Education?

3. As members of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team, what do you think your needs are in order to effectively implement the policy of Inclusive Education?
4. What skills do you think will enable you to be effective?
5. What conditions would be required in order to implement Inclusive Education/?
6. What are the barriers that you think will prevent the team from being effective?
7. Who else besides you (teachers and parents) should be included in the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team?

The types of responses that the researcher aimed at eliciting in both interviews were those that would indicate the knowledge, skills and attitudes that the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team requires in implementing the policy of inclusive education.

3.3.3 Field Notes

Field notes are written accounts, made during the focus group discussion or shortly thereafter. Merriam (1988:98) suggests that field notes include verbal descriptions of the settings, the participants, activities; and direct quotations or at least the substance of what people said. The observer's comments can include feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations and working hypotheses.

Bailey (1989:250) lists five components of field notes:

1. Running description;
2. Previously forgotten happenings that are now recalled;
3. Analytical ideas and inferences;
4. Personal impressions and feelings; and
5. Notes for further information.

According to Merriam (1988:98), field notes form a supportive source of data and need to be analysed and are useful for later data interpretation. In this study the researcher made use of field notes throughout the project and was used as background data.

3.4 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:10), data analysis is a process of selection, sharpening, sorting, focusing, discarding and organizing in order to make sense out of the

data, integrate the data, draw conclusions and verify data. It allows the researcher to produce conclusions and generalizations that are congruent.

Creswell (1998:142) states that qualitative researchers “learn by doing”. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) define qualitative data analysis as a process consisting of three phases: data reduction; data display; and conclusion drawing or verification. These three processes are in constant interaction and are interwoven before, during and after data collection. In this view then, qualitative data analysis is “a continuous iterative enterprise” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:119).

3.4.1 Data Reduction

The identification of themes is part of data reduction which occurs throughout a project and is conceptualised as the ongoing process of extracting, selecting, transcribing, simplifying, interpreting and transforming data from its transcribed raw data form, through to information that can be applied in the field (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10). Data reduction is part of the analysis of data, whereby the researcher “sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11). In this study the data reduction process was achieved by clustering, conceptualizing and dendrograming.

The tapes of the focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim, then the raw data were coded and clustered topically and contextually using the technique described by Miles and Huberman (1994:249) as dendrograming.

3.4.2 Clustering and Conceptualization

Miles and Huberman (1994:249) describes clustering as a tactic employed to try and understand a phenomenon better by grouping and then conceptualizing objects that have similar patterns and characteristics. This reduction method of “clumping” aims at assessing which things are like each other and need to be grouped, and which need to be left out.

Clustering is the inductive formation of categories and may be viewed as a method of moving to higher levels of abstraction (Miles & Huberman, 1994:249). Clustering, coding and patterning are closely linked. Coding is the “key process” since it involves the

organization of the copious notes and transcripts that have been collected, into more manageable units of information (Miles & Huberman, 1994:249).

The process of clustering in this study was accomplished in the following manner:

- The data obtained from focus group interviews were transcribed.
- The transcribed data were read several times in order to form a broad and holistic picture.
- The main ideas and themes were recorded.
- Semantic units were identified and indicated on the particular data source.
- Semantic units were then grouped together in categories.
- Dendrograms of the main categories and semantic units were then drawn to arrive at a deeper analysis of meanings and themes.

The process of all the above is the main focus of Chapter Four.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In order for any study to be regarded as scientific, the researcher needs to ensure that the study reflects credibility (i.e. reliability is believable), and is trusted by the reader. Merriam (1988:164) states that "all research is concerned with is producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner". Validity and reliability are achieved via careful attention to a study's conceptualisation and the way, in which data is collected, analyzed and interpreted (Merriam, 1988:166). Thus, Mason (1996:145) states that the way in which qualitative data is judged through validating of data and accuracy of method (reliability).

Leedy (1997:168) and Merriam (1988:167) state that there is no single commonly accepted standard for judging or ensuring the reliability and validity of qualitative research. The types of validity that were used in this study were as follows:

3.5.1 Internal Validity

" Validity, in qualitative research, deals with the question of how the researcher's findings match reality" (Merriam, 1988:166). Given that reality is multi-dimensional, everchanging and in a sense subjective, Eisenhart and Howe (in Le Compte, Millroy & Priessle, 1992:657) present six standards of validity that need to be invoked in a validity research project. These are:

- That there be a fit between one's research question, data collecting procedures and analysis techniques.
- That there are credible reasons for selecting a specific group of subjects, specific data gathering procedures and specific analysis techniques.
- That there is alertness to, and coherence with, prior knowledge derived from a comprehensive literary review.
- That there is value constraints in terms of the usefulness of the study and the risks involved. This addresses the issue of both the usefulness of the particular research, as well as ethical considerations towards the participants.
- That the project is comprehensive in terms of clarity, coherence and competence.
- That there is an application of five of these standards and that attention to them is borne in mind throughout the project.

Internal validity is the freedom from bias in forming conclusions in view of the data. It is important for the researcher to capture and portray the reality of the world as it appears to the people who live in it (Leedy, 1997:41). The reality that is being referred to according to Merriam (1988:120) is "a multiple set of mental constructions made by humans; their constructions are in their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them".

Merriam (1988:169) and Leedy (1997:168) suggest the following methods used to ensure internal validity of this study.

3.5.1.1 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods. This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that the researcher develops (Maxwell, 1996:94). In order to achieve triangulation in this study, the researcher used multiple data collection methods. Data were gathered by means of focus group interviews with accompanying field notes.

3.5.2 External Validity

According to Leedy (1997:41), external validity is concerned with the generalization of the conclusions reached through observation of a sample to the universe. Merriam (1988:173) on the other hand, states that “external validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations”.

Merriam (1988; as quoted by Creswell, 1994:158) states that the “intent of qualitative research is not to generalize findings, but to form a unique interpretation of events”. One should however be aware that the general resides in the specific, and what one learns from a specific situation is transferable to other situations, determined by the degree of similarity or goodness of fit between the two contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994:279).

3.5.3 Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which studies can be replicated. It assumes that a researcher using the same methods can obtain the same results as those of a prior study (LeCompte, et al. 1992:332).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1981; as quoted by Merriam, 1988:171) reliability and validity are inextricably linked in the conduct of research, they state that “demonstration of internal validity amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability”. Therefore the same methods employed to ensure internal validity, consequently ensure reliability.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most authors who discuss qualitative research design address the importance of ethical considerations (Creswell, 1994: 165). First and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of informants. The methods employed to control the ethical standards of this study will be briefly discussed:

3.6.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

All participants of the focus group interviews were reassured that their names would not be used in the transcripts. The transcripts, field notes and all the videotapes will be kept in a safe place after the information has been examined and the research has been completed.

A pseudonym was used for the school in this report to protect the participants.

3.6.2 Voluntary participation

The participants were reassured that they were under no obligation to participate. The research objectives were articulated verbally so that they clearly understood how the data would be used. The procedure, time requirements and type of participation expected was explained from the onset of the focus group interview.

3.6.3 Feedback

The participants in the focus group and the headmaster of the school concerned were ensured that the findings of the study would be shared with them at the conclusion of the study. This is also part of the validation process.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, research design, research methods, validity and reliability of study has been described. In conclusion, ethical considerations are discussed. In Chapter 4, presentation, analysis and discussion of data and findings of the study will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at providing the reader with a detailed understanding of what the needs of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team are in order to implement the policy of inclusion. It begins by briefly clarifying the research problem. It then continues with a description of the study in terms of its context. This is followed by an example of the data from the focus groups, which is presented in a transcribed raw state. The process of analysis into semantic units and categories is demonstrated, and the themes are described. These themes are then integrated with existing theory. This chapter concludes with suggestions for further research and comments on the limitations of this study.

4.1.1 The Research Problem

Inclusive education requires the accommodation of a diversity of learner needs in a unified system of education. However, it is a fact that many teachers are not adequately trained to deal with such diversity. Thus, this study is aimed at finding out what are the needs of a Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in implementing the policy of inclusive education.

4.2. THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

As already been described in Chapter Three, (section, 3.4.2), the data for this research were derived from two focus groups, namely with teachers and the other one with parents who were part of the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team. The attendance of the focus group interviews was voluntary and in both cases the fact that the data were to be used for research purpose was stressed. The context of the study was discussed in Chapter Three (refer to section, 3.2.2).

4.2.1 The Teachers

All the teachers reside in the suburbs. The teacher's teaching experiences and qualifications varied. See table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Teacher’s Qualifications and Experiences

| Teachers | Qualifications | Experience | Teaching-Grades |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Teacher 1 | TED, BA B.ED | 11 Years | 2 |
| Teacher 2 | TED, Remedial Diploma | 7 Years | 1 |
| Teacher 3 | TED, Remedial Diploma | 15 Years | 1 |
| Teacher 4 | TED | 4 Years | 4 |
| Teacher 5 | Teacher’s Certificate | 19 Years | 4 |
| Teacher 6 | Teacher’s Certificate | 15 Years | 3 |
| Teacher 7 | TED | 18 Years | 3 |

4.2.2 The Parents

The focus group interview was held on a Sunday at the school because all the parents who belong to the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team, except one, are employed. The interview was held after parents meeting where the Code of Conduct document was discussed. All the parents who participated in the study reside in Diepkloof. The interview took place in the principal’s office. The most active participant in the group was an elderly man who has a grandchild at the school. The reason for his active participation may be attributed to the fact that he usually accompanied the principal to district meetings. Thus, he was more enlightened and showed a better understanding of the policy of inclusion. Unfortunately, members of both groups have not received any training on inclusive education. The principal normally gives them feedback after attending district meetings.

They were permitted to communicate in their mother tongue in order to be able to express themselves as comfortably as possible. The interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. The whole group was very eager to share their thoughts and feelings honestly.

4.3 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The methods of data analysis have already been described in detail in Chapter Three. (section, 3.4) Broadly speaking, the data from both focus groups were analysed and

reduced, via the process of coding and clustering data topically and contextually by a means of a technique that is referred to as dendrogramming. The following is the process of data analysis.

4.3.1 The Process of Data Analysis and Reduction

An example of the transcript of data from each focus group interview is presented. The process of clustering and categorizing as applied to the transcribed data is illustrated.

The raw data from both focus groups were transcribed from the audio-taped form to a verbatim transcription of the data.

Transcription Codes

| Code | Meaning |
|-------------|------------|
| T 1, 2, etc | Teacher |
| P 1, 2, etc | Parent |
| R | Researcher |

4.3.1.1 An Example of Data Analysis from the Focus Group Interview: Teachers.

What follows is an example of the transcribed raw data from the focus group interview with teachers, as well as an example of the analysis of the raw data into semantic units and categories.

R: What is your understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education?

T1: To me, inclusive education means accepting learners unconditionally.

T4: I'm not sure whether you mean accepting with whatever differences they have (T1 agrees).

T5: Maybe to clarify, I think it means accommodating children who are from the same neighbourhood in the same school irrespective of their disabilities.

T2: I have a problem with what you have just said because I'm worried that learners with disabilities may be ridiculed by others (T3 nods).

- T3:** Just to add to what teacher 2 has said, I feel it is unfair for other learners without disabilities to be accommodated in the same class because they are working at a different pace.
- T5:** Yes, I am also concerned about the fact that they may not be able to get enough attention from their teacher (the group agrees).
- T1:** And with the problem of attention, we also need to reduce the number of learners in the classroom.
- T2:** To T1 I thought you liked the idea of inclusive education.
- T1:** I have nothing against it but I feel that as long as we have this large numbers of learners in a class it is going to be difficult to meet the needs of all learners.

The above raw data in its transcribed format were then analysed into semantic units and categories as illustrated below in Table 4.2.

The presentation of these tables is a method of data display. Data displays, according to Miles & Huberman (1994:11), are used by researchers to “assemble organised information into an immediately accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening”. Analysts are instructed to “hand craft” appropriate data displays for their own study (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 93).

Table 4.2 An Example of Data Analysis from the teachers Focus Group Interview

| Semantic Unit | Category |
|---|--|
| To involve parents. | Importance of parental involvement and training. |
| To design a curriculum which will address the needs of all learners. | Appropriateness of a curriculum. |
| To raise funds in order to be independent. | Financial assistance. |
| We all need to educate the community about inclusion. | Educate the community. |
| In order to for effectively with parents and learners, we need to have communication, decision-making and evaluation skills training. | Training to work effectively with parents. |
| For us as teachers to be effective, we are going to need on-going training. | In-service training/professional development is essential. |
| The curriculum should be changed in order to meet the needs of all the learners. | A flexible curriculum is a necessity. |
| I feel that if we are to accommodate | Change physical setting. |

| | |
|--|--|
| learners with different disabilities, then we need to renovate the school. | |
| We will not be able to renovate it without financial assistance from the government. | Financial assistance. |
| Accepting one another unconditionally. | Importance of mutual acceptance in inclusion. |
| Allowing all learners irrespective of their differences to attend the same school. | Discrimination should be discouraged. |
| Allowing learners to be taught irrespective of their disabilities. | Teachers must adopt a curriculum that includes every learner. |
| Learners with disabilities will be ridiculed by other learners. | Concern about peer reaction. |
| Learners with disabilities will not get enough attention. | Limitation of individualised attention. |
| Numbers of learners should be reduced in class. | Smaller classes are important. |
| To be trained on how to work with learners with different abilities. | Need for training that incorporates learners who have mixed abilities. |

The same procedure was followed step by step for the complete focus group interview with the parents.

4.3.1.2 An Example of Data Analysis from the Focus Group Interview with Parents.

What follows is an example of the transcribed raw data from the focus group interview with the parents, as well as an example of the analysis of the raw data into semantic units and categories.

R: What is your understanding of Inclusive Education?

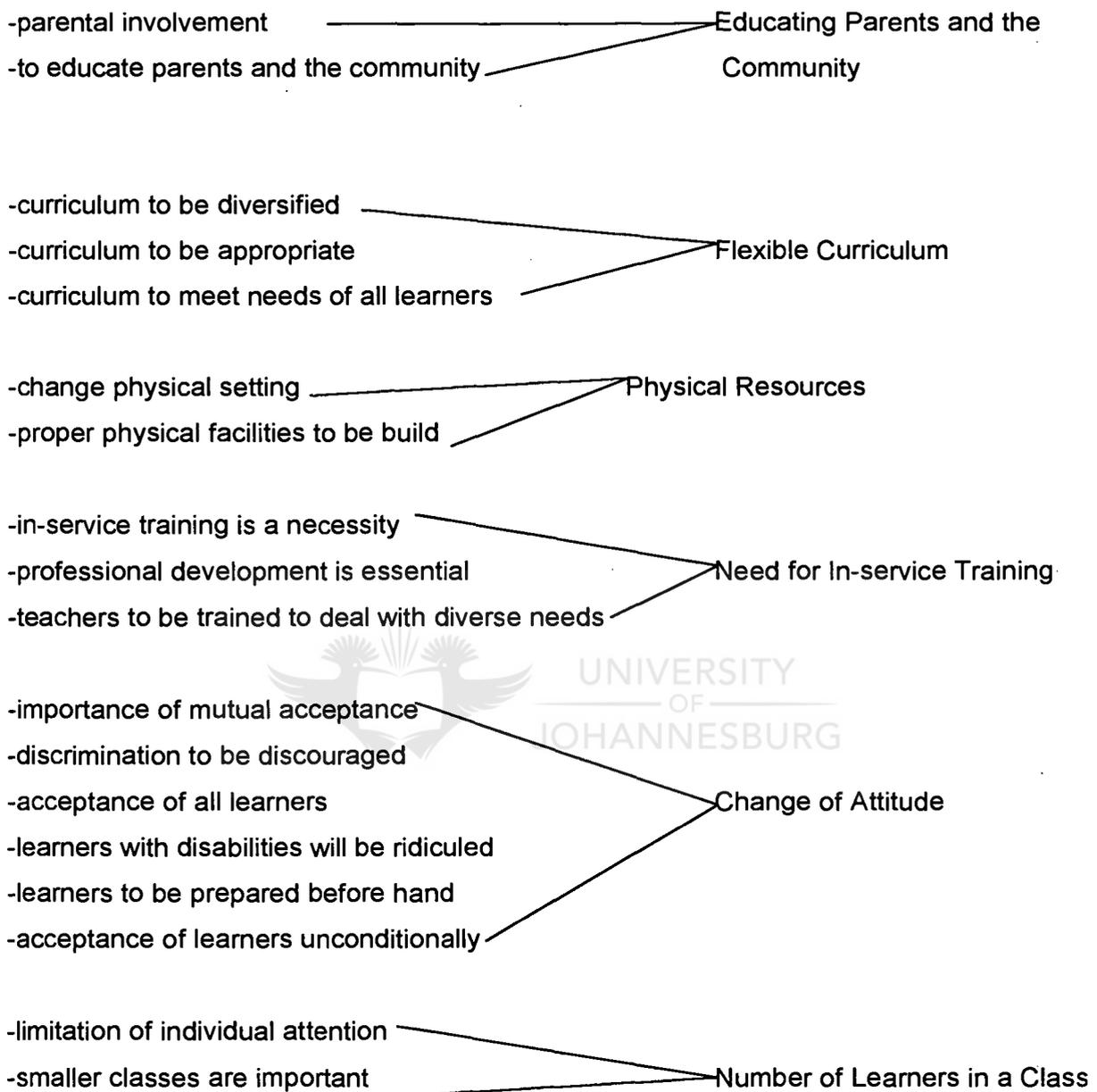
P1: It means accepting all learners as they are. We have discussed it but we have realised that we have no resources yet and our teachers are not trained to teach such children. This kind of education needs specialised training (the group nods). You can not just take any ordinary teacher and throw him in a class because he will expect this child who has a disability to behave like an ordinary child, whereas, the child has a disability of sight or hearing and all this difficulties need a specially trained teacher. Even access to the school would be a problem for example, a child on the wheel chair (facilities) stairs- no ramps.

- R:** Ladies what are your opinions?
- P3:** It does not mean that we do not like children with disabilities, but just like what P1 has explained, what is important is that we have no relevant facilities and teachers are not trained on how to teach them but we as members of the community as parents we welcome the idea because we would like them to play together so that they can get used to each other.
- P2:** Not that they should go to a different school like Takalane (school for mentally handicapped children in Soweto) and when they go to their different schools then were are discriminating against them. They should attend school near their homes.
- P1:** They must have a sense of belonging.
- P4:** Parents should also feel comfortable unlike those who take their child to Takalane...they feel inferior about it.
- P1:** Takalane itself is not right because it is a segregatory school. These children see themselves as outcasts.

Table 4.3 An Example of Data Analysis from the Focus Group Interview with Parents.

| Semantic Unit | Category |
|---|---|
| Accepting learners as they are without any discrimination. | Acceptance of all learners. |
| For inclusion to be effective parents and teachers should be trained. | Training is important. |
| Learners who are disabled will have difficulties in moving freely in the school. | Proper physical facilities should be build. |
| To be included in the classrooms with the aim of helping teachers. | Teacher support. |
| To educate the community about inclusion. | Educate the community. |
| In order to support teachers we need skills such as communication, conflict Management and assessment skills. | Training is important. |
| We also need help from those teachers and parents who have disabled children. | Support from teacher and parents. |
| We need to invite the Dept of Education to help with changing the curriculum to meet the needs of all the children. | Curriculum should be flexible. |
| The Dept of Education must employ more teachers. | Class Size. |
| Children to be prepared before disabled learners are accepted. | Prepare learners. |
| Parents and the community need to be educated. | Parents and community to be educated. |

The following dendrogram shows the final categorisation of the themes emerging from the teachers and parents as data sources.



In order to arrive at a deeper analysis of meanings and themes, dendrogramming of the main categories was undertaken. The categories that were identified in the two focus group interviews were reduced to the final themes.

4.4 MAIN THEMES THAT EMERGED

The following table presents the main themes that emerged from the data sources when the categories were reduced. Each theme will be discussed individually.

Table 4.4 Main Themes that Emerged

| Focus Group with Teachers | Focus Group with Parents |
|---|--|
| 1. Need for In-Service Training | Need for In-Service Training |
| 2. Curriculum to be diversified | Curriculum to be diversified |
| 3. Parents and the community to be educated | Parents and the community to be educated |
| 4. Numbers of learners in a class | Number of learners in a class |
| 5. Create a culture of respect and acceptance for diversity especially among learners | Attitude among learners should change |
| 6. Physical Resources | Physical Resources |



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4.4.1 Need for In-Service Training

Most of the participants in the focus group did not understand what was expected from them and teachers did not feel they have the knowledge or skills to appropriately plan for and instruct all learners with barriers to learning. Although they felt that they lacked skills, the whole group supported inclusive education. Both teachers and parents felt that they needed training in order to be supported in developing more inclusive practices. This is more evident in statements such as the following:

“ Izidingo zethu njenge nhlango yesikolo,sidinga Ukuqeqeshwa ukuze sifundise zonke izingane ngo phandle kobandhlululo. Ukuze siphumule kahle kemele siqeqeshwe”.

“Our needs as Centre-of-Learning-Based Team is to be trained on how to educate children with different

abilities and I feel we can't achieve this if we are not trained".

"Ukuze othisha baphumelele kufanele baqeqeshwe ngaso sonke isikhathi".

"For us teachers to be effective we need on-going training".

This confirms the views held by Vaughn and Schumm (1995:268) when they state that in responsible inclusion programs, personnel realise that for teachers and other key personnel to be effective, ongoing professional development at the Centre-of-Learning Based Team is required because many teachers do not feel they have knowledge or skills to appropriately plan for and instruct learners with disabilities. This professional development may include educational programs such as workshops, mini courses, as well as innovative ways to enhance professional development, which may include, teacher-to-teacher mentor programs.

In the research done by Bennett, et al. (1997: 127) it is indicated that the need for ongoing training for teachers, training that includes disability awareness, information on the benefits of inclusion, and factors that promote successful inclusion is important (refer to section 2.4). Sebba and Ainscow (1996) further state that it is necessary to employ strategies that will enhance confidence and support a degree of risk taking (refer to section 2.4.1). A powerful strategy in this respect involves teachers participating in experiences that illustrate and stimulate a consideration of new possibilities for action. The need for ongoing training is also supported by the survey data which showed the positive relationship between the extent of training in working with learners with disabilities and attitudes toward the concept of inclusion and confidence in the ability to implement inclusion.

The need for competent, well-trained teachers is essential. Research studies indicate that most black teachers in South Africa need to be retrained. Due to the fact that learners with mild to moderate disabilities are found in all regular schools, teachers should be trained at all levels to meet these learner needs (Skuy & Partington, 1990:182). Thus, the teachers felt that they needed skills enabling them to be responsive to diversity in the learner population and ensure that barriers to learning and development are addressed. On-going in-service training is regarded as a necessity.

4.4.2 Curriculum should be Flexible.

According to teachers the current curriculum does not cater for the diverse needs of all learners in the classroom. A flexible curriculum and mechanisms to address barriers to learning and development should be available. This need was expressed in statements such as ...**“Kuzoba nzima ukufeza izidingo zabafundi bonke ngaphandle kokushintsha endlela yokufundisa. Kuzumela uhulumeli asincede ukutshintsha indlela yokufundisa”**... (**“ We cannot be able to meet the needs of all learners if the curriculum is not changed”** and **“Maybe we should invite people from the Department of Education to come and help the team in changing the curriculum”**) (Focus Group with teachers and parents). They felt that developing an inclusive school does include curriculum transformation to ensure that the diverse needs of all the learners are met.

The DNE (1997) report makes a number of recommendations regarding the curriculum. A central feature of all the recommendations is that there needs to be flexibility regarding the teaching and learning process. This means that all aspects of the curriculum need to be developed to ensure that the diverse needs of all learners (refer to section 2.3.1.2).

The outcomes-based education framework of Curriculum 2005 which is currently being implemented in South Africa emphasises the teacher's role in curriculum development, highlighting the need for teachers to develop their competence to identify and respond to local needs, thus providing a flexible programme for accommodating the diverse needs of the learners. To enable all centres of learning to accommodate the diversity in the learner population, overall curriculum transformation is required which includes review and/or development of all the various aspects. This includes: the learning environment; the learning programmes; the teaching practices; how learning outcomes are assessed; assessment of the system; the materials, facilities and equipment available; the medium of teaching and learning; the capacity of teachers; the nature of support provided to enable access to the learning programmes and the nature of support provided to teachers (DNE, 1997). Curriculum 2005 provides a flexible framework to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners.

Ainscow (1992:3-8) states that pre-conditions for implementing the policy of inclusion is to consider the curriculae and subject content that is totally different and that meets the needs of each individual learner in a very specific manner. They also emphasise that care should be taken not to emphasise individual disabilities or special needs, but to look at the class as

a whole in a total context. Van Dyke, Stallings and Colley (1995:478), agrees that a very important part is to allow each learner to participate actively at his or her own level and to meet individualized goals in an overlapping curriculum. Offering different materials on the same topic but at different reading levels has proved to be very successful. The same curriculum goals are expected of all learners, but differences are taken into account.

4.4.3 Parents and the Community to be Educated

Both groups felt that it was important to educate parents and the community about inclusion. This was evident in statements such as..... **“Sidinga ukufundisa umphakathi nge mfundo enakelela izidingo zabobonke”** (“we need to educate the community about inclusion”) and....**“Abazali nomphakathi badinga ukufundiswa ngobambano”** (“parents and the community as a whole need to be educated about inclusion”).

Parents should be empowered to be of help to their children. Everybody should learn from each other. Ainscow (1993:10) calls this “a partnership approach to professional development”. Parents need to be included as respected and equal members of the team. Improved communication with parents will positively affect the inclusion experience and the subsequent development of social, academic and developmental skills of the child (Bennett, *et al.* 1997:129). Thus, Burden (1995: 52) maintains that parents should be empowered to be the “ main agents of change”. The community should therefore be fully involved and commit themselves to the cause, because success will demand total mind switch. Ainscow (1995) believes that the community as a whole should come to grips with the true meaning of the concept, be taught the necessary skills and commit themselves to adhering to it (refer to section 2.4). In this way collaboration as equal partners could be promoted.

As reflected in the NCSNET/ NCESS report (DNE, 1997), the benefits of parent involvement in the development of an inclusive school is not only to the school. Having a close partnership with parents enables parents to further develop their own skills and understanding in supporting their own children through the schooling process. The development of an inclusive school has to be placed in the context of building an inclusive society of which the family is a central part.

4.4.4 Number of Learners in a Class

The concern of learner/teacher ratio was also raised. Teachers felt that if the learners are too many, teachers won't be able to give proper attention to their needs. The teachers were also concerned about the redeployment and felt that they were understaffed. They felt that having to cope with normal day to day problems in these large classes, was nearly more than they were able to do. The concern aired was that learners with disabilities demanded so much more attention. This was reflected in the statement made by both teachers and parents.... **"Inani labafundi kumele lincishiwe ukuze bafundiswe ngamunye"...** (**"numbers of learners should be reduced in order to be given individual attention"**) (Focus group with teachers)**"Uhulumeli kumele aqashe othisha abaningi ngoba akulula ukuthi uthisha oyedwa afundise izingane eziningi amunye"....**(**"the department of education should employ more teachers because it is not going to be easy for teachers who have fifty learners in a class"** (Focus group with parents).

Ainscow (1992:10) believes that ratio of learners to a teacher should be such as to enable teachers to give proper attention to the needs of each learner. York, et al. (1992:246) supports this statement when he states that a good predictor of more positive attitudes towards inclusion, has been found to be smaller class sizes. The NCSNET/ NCESS report (DNE, 1997:94) states that there is a need to move towards looking at teacher workloads rather than teacher: learner ratios. Class assistants could be another way of reducing the load on teachers (refer to section 2.2). Teachers should also develop (and be trained) instructional practices, for example, cooperative learning, buddy systems in order to deal with the large numbers.

4.4.5 To create a Culture of Respect and Acceptance for Diversity

The teachers as well as parents were also concerned about the importance of acceptance and respect for all learners. This was echoed by some of the teachers when they said ... **"Kumele samukele abafundi ngaphandle ko bandlululo"** (**"accepting learners unconditionally"**) and parents when they said ... **"Uma abafundi abanezinkinga bathunyelwa ezikolweni zabo bodwa, loku kuba ubandlululo. Kubenza abantu abangafunwa emphakatini"...** (**"accepting learners as they are without any discrimination"...****"when learners with barriers to learning attend special schools then we are discriminating against them.... as a result they feel like outcasts"**).

The principle of diversity can be used as a basis for furthering the fundamental principles of the new Constitution in South Africa (RSA,1996) and thereby move us towards the development of an inclusive society. It is important that the principle of diversity be linked to the principle of integration to ensure that the focus on “differences” is towards commonality rather than towards a notion of separate development. According to Donald and Hlongwane (1989:121) respecting diversity in the learner population means:

- developing a genuine respect for all people;
- combating prejudice and discriminatory practices;
- drawing on the different strengths of the human resources available in the teaching and learning context to the mutual benefit of all;
- acknowledging and supporting the rights of all learners and others to full participation in the learning and teaching process; and
- developing a flexible curriculum that meets the diverse needs of the learner population.

The principle of social integration in a centre of learning context implies the facilitation of opportunities for learners and other members of the learning community to learn and work together in a cooperative environment; to address prejudices whenever necessary; to review differences as a rich resource to benefit all and to nurture respect for oneself and others. It is clear that a successful fully inclusive classroom requires teachers to be sensitive to diversity and creative in their choice of teaching strategies and learning activities.

There were also fears about how the learners will react to each other especially because of various types of disabilities. This was reflected in statements such as...”**Abafundi abanezinkinga ba za hlukunyezwa ezinye izingane...** (“learners with disabilities will be ridiculed by other learners.”)(Focus Group with teachers); and ... “**Kufuneka izingane zonke zifundiswe ngaphambi kokuba zihlanganiswe ndawonye**”... (“children should be prepared before learners with disabilities are accommodated in the school”) (Focus Group with parents). Thus, they felt that peers should also be workshopped on how to accept these learners.

These sentiments have been reflected in different studies such as that of Idol (1997:392) who states that other learners in the class where inclusion is to take place must be educated about the barriers faced by the included learner in a healthy, positive and nurturing way. Learners are naturally kind, unless they learn otherwise, and can be incredibly supportive of

one another especially under firm, positive and strong teacher leadership. Van Dyke, et al. (1995: 478) also states that involving learners, as peer helpers for learners with disabilities is a very effective strategy. Peers need to understand the unique aspects of their classmates; to learn facts not myths; to learn how to interact with their classmates; and to develop empathy and respect for that learner. Teachers will need to model strategies for learners and allow them to be involved in problem-solving sessions. Peer assistance and support can help nondisabled learners build and maintain relationships with their disabled peers. Classrooms in which diversity is valued can enrich the learning of all learners involved.

Ainscow (1993:8) supports this statement by stating that peers (buddies) should be part of each group assisting these learners. "Groups allows individuals to reach beyond themselves, to be part of something that none of them would have attained on their own and to discover ways of thinking with others to mutual benefit". The functional involvement of all can be made possible by adhering to a transdisciplinary approach (refer to section 1.2) or rather, "a culture of collaboration" (Ainscow, 1993:8).

4.4.6 Physical Resources

Both focus groups were concerned about barriers in the environment which might prevent some learners from enjoying equal opportunities with other learners. These structural barriers may be, for example, a flight of stairs, inaccessible toilets, etc. This is confirmed by statements such as... **"Izakhiwo zezokolo kumele zilungiswe ukuze zilungele zonke izingane"...** ("I feel that if we are to accommodate learners with different disabilities then we need to renovate the school."). The respondents felt that the centre of learning should instil an environment which should accommodate the diverse needs of the learning population and enable all learners to move around the environment freely and unhindered.

Vaughn and Schumm (1995:266) support this by stating that in responsible inclusion programs, successful inclusion requires considerable resources. Inclusion is not an opportunity to reduce the cost of providing services to learners with disabilities. The NCSNET/NCESS report (DNE, 1997) states that all centres of learning must become accessible in terms of building requirements to learners, teachers and community members with physical disabilities. Existing centres of learning would have to be progressively altered to ensure accessibility so that the choice of learners with disabilities would be progressively widened.

It is clear from this data that although the participants use rhetoric from the policy documents, they still process a narrow view of inclusive education. They mainly focused on disabilities and ignored all the other barriers.

4.5 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM RESEARCH FINDINGS

In response to the central research question, namely: **What are the needs of a Centre-of-Learning-Based Team in order to implement the policy of inclusive education?** findings of this study suggest that the Centre-of-Learning Based Team can implement the policy of inclusion more effectively when their needs for training and support are being met. The conclusions that can be drawn from the above discussion are the following:

Both groups have no objection to inclusion but feel that they need more knowledge and resources for it to be successfully implemented. They believe that emphasis should be placed on more community involvement and education of the community on inclusion. In addition the emotional needs of learners with/ without barriers to learning should be considered during this process. As teacher-pupil ratio is also a major concern, the respondents suggested that inclusion is only possible if the class sizes could be kept down. They further suggested that the need for a flexible curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.

Successful inclusion requires restructuring of the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved, and it requires educational planning and capacity building, not only for learners with barriers to learning and development, but also for families, educational authorities, teachers and all the learners (Westby, *et al.* 1994: 22). The above discussion suggests that the needs of the teachers, learners, parents and the community need to be taken into consideration when implementing the policy of inclusion. For a large country like South Africa, it will not be possible to satisfy all its inhabitants, but for the sake of all learners it would be good if the community as a whole could come to grips with the principles of inclusion and come to a decision that will bring people together and not separate them again. Finally, it will be very important for South Africa to learn from the global community, as they are also still deeply involved in innovations around inclusion.

4.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

4.6.1 Implications for Current Theory and Practice

Inclusion is a fairly new phenomenon in South Africa, and there is still a need to develop contextually appropriate theory. While it is quite enriching to learn from the experience of the international world, our experiences will be more meaningful if we adopt not only inclusive education policies but also a broader notion of “barriers to learning and development”. Subsequently “education for all” can be seen as a crucial part of the overall social, political and economic transformation which the country is experiencing.

4.6.2 Implications for Further Research

Most of the studies on inclusion focus on international success. It is therefore important that further research should take place in our schools to describe:

- Teacher’s experience of change
- Teacher’s experience of the implementation of inclusion.
- Educational practices that foster inclusive education.

4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS



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Ongoing evaluation is an integral part of building inclusive and collaborative centres of learning. Three classes of variables should be evaluated according to Idol (1997):

- a) Learner change (changes in the skills, behaviours and attitudes of learners who are included and peers in the inclusion classroom);
- b) adult change (changes in the skills, behaviours and attitudes of Centre-of-Learning Based Team in supporting the learner to be included); and
- c) system change (changes in the Centre-of-Learning procedures, policies, instructional arrangements, classroom management, referrals to special programs, community support and attitudes).

4.7.1 Recommendations to the Centre-of-Learning-Based Team

Support for teachers in their increasingly demanding roles is vital. Many 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 Centre-of-Learning as a whole. The development of collaborative relationships among teachers so that expertise may be shared is crucial to the success in meeting the diverse needs of all learners in inclusive education settings (Thousand & Villa, 1995). It further promotes teaching to be more responsive to the needs of the learner, which allows for the recognition of individual differences, and thereby development of the learner's full potential in an environment where learners are to play a more active role in the learning situation. It requires implementing a flexible curriculum with flexible teaching and assessment methods, organising resources to support diversity and active participation of the parents and the community.

4.7.2 Areas in which the Centre-of-Learning can facilitate change

The Centre-of-Learning can facilitate change by bringing about Whole School development where the essential human qualities are essential, such as kindness, acceptance of others, awareness and sensitivity and understanding of every learner are promoted. It also makes provision for the development of partnerships with school/family and community and networking with other centres-of-learning. Most importantly it facilitates working in teams (refer to section 2.4.5) and values diversity.

4.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE INQUIRY

It is important for every researcher to mention any limitations that may raise questions regarding the credibility of the study. An important limitation to take into account in this inquiry is that the study was based on a very small sample of respondents, which cannot be generalized.

The second limitation is that a researcher with no prior experience conducted the study. Many unintentional errors were thus made. However, reflection on these, contributed to the growth process of the researcher.

Finally, limitations of time and money necessitated limited data collection.

4.9 FINAL COMMENTS

In this chapter the findings of the analyzed data were interpreted and discussed, within the framework of existing theory, as presented in Chapter Two. The themes were discussed and recommendations and suggestions were made. Possible areas of further research were suggested and the limitations of the inquiry were stated.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that as South Africa begins to implement inclusive education, collaboration among teachers, parents and learners should be recognized as a critical feature for success. However, it is important to note that teachers in inclusive classrooms cannot accommodate all learners effectively without support. Finding ways of working together to make schools more inclusive is the challenge which faces teachers, learners, parents, the education system and the community they serve.



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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Interview with Teachers

R: What is your understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education?

T1: To me, inclusive education means accepting learners unconditionally.

T4: I'm not sure whether you mean accepting with whatever differences they have (T1 agrees).

T5: Maybe to clarify, I think it means accommodating children who are from the same neighbourhood in the same school irrespective of their disabilities.

T2: I have a problem with what you have just said because I'm worried that learners with disabilities may be ridiculed by others (T3 nods).

T3: Just to add to what teacher 2 has said, I feel it is unfair for other learners without disabilities to be accommodated in the same class because they are working at a different pace.

T5: Yes, I am also concerned about the fact that they may not be able to get enough attention from the their teacher (the group agrees).

T1: And with problem of attention, we also need to reduce the number of learners in the classroom.

T2: To T1 I thought you liked the idea of inclusive education.

T1: I have nothing against it but I feel that as long as we have this large numbers of learners in a class it is going to be difficult to meet the needs of all learners.

R: What are your needs in helping to implement the policy of inclusion education?

T4: Our needs as a centre-of-learning based team would be to be trained on how work with learners with different abilities (group nods their heads).

T6: I agree entirely with T4 and I think parents should also be involved in this training so that they can understand why we should accommodate learners with disabilities.

T3: I think that we cannot reach our goal if the Department of Education is not involved and also the curriculum should be altered in order to address the needs of all learners.

- T7: Yes, I agree, furthermore, I see our role as that of working together with the Department of Education so that they can guide and support us.
- T1: We should also play a supportive role other teachers so that they can be encouraged to bring their problems or difficulties that they encounter to the team.

R: What skills do you think will enable you to be effective?

- T2: I'm not sure, (looking a bit hesitant) I think we need communication skills because we will be educating other teachers as well as parents and learners.
- T5: We must also have the knowledge that will enable us to evaluate our programs whether they are working or not.
- T3: What about team building skill?
- T1: I agree with you if we do not know how to work as a team then we will encounter problems.
- T4: I feel on-going training is a necessity.
- T7: Do you perhaps mean in-service training?
- T6: Yes, and also skills on how to run workshops because we will be educating the community and the learners.

R: What conditions would be required in order to implement inclusion?

- T5: We need more teachers so that we do not have a large number of learners in our classes.
- T2: Just as T5 has said earlier, if the learners are not that many in the class then we can give them individual attention.
- T6: The school needs to be renovated to meet the needs of all learners.
- T1: We cannot meet the needs of all learners if the curriculum is not changed (the group agrees).

R: What barriers/obstacles will prevent you from being effective?

- T4: Lack of in depth knowledge.
- T2: If teacher-pupil ratio is not changed.
- T3: If we do not get support from specialist teachers.
- T7: Lack of support from parents and the community.

R: Niqondani ngohlelo lwefundo edidiyelayo?

- T1: Kimi ifundo edidiyelayo isho ukwamukela abafundi ngaphandle kwemibandela.
- T4: Angiqondi noma usho ukubamukela ngokwehlukana kwabo (T1 uyavuma).
- T5: Ake ngicacise, ngibona kusho ukamukela izingane ezivela endaweni eyodwa nesesikoleni esisodwa ngaphandle kokunaka ukukhubazeka kwabo.
- T2: Nginenkinga ngalokhu osanda kukuphawula ngoba abafundi abanezinkinga bangaba yinhlekiso kwabanye (T3 unqekusiza ikhanda).
- T3: Ukuthasisela kulokho okushiwo uT2 ngicabanga ukuthi akulungile ukabadidiyela ngoba abafundi abangenazingqinamba basebanza ngezinga elithe xaxa kunalaba abanezigqinamba.
- T5: Yebo nami kuthanda ukungangiphathi kahle lokho ngoba bangase bangatholi isikhathi nisineke abasidingayo kothisha (iqembu liyavuma).
- T1: Ukuze uthisha abanakekele kahle kubalulekile ukuba kwehliswe amanani abafundi amaklasini.
- T2: (Ku T1) Benithi uyawuthanda umqondo wokudidiyela kwezefundo.
- T1: Anginankinga nako kodwa uma amanani abafundi angancishiswa kuzoba nzinyana ukuze zonke izidingo zabafundi.

R: Yiziphi izidingo okudinga zifezeke ukuze uhlelo lokudidiyela abafundi lusebenze kahle?

- T4: Izidingo zethu njengesizinda seqembu lokufundisa ukuba siqeqeshelwe ukusebenza nabafundi abanezigqinamba ezahlukene(iqembu lingekuzisa amakhanda).
- T6: Ngiyavumulana no T4 futhi ngicabanga ukuthi kuhle ukuba nabazali baqeqeshwe ukuze baqonde izizathu ezivuna ukwamukela abafundi abanezinkinga.
- T3: Ngicabanga ukuthi ngeke zifezeke izihloso zethu uma umnyango wezimfundo ungabambisana nathi kanthifuthi nohlelo olulandelwayo kufanale lushinthswe ukekufezake izidingo zabo bonke abafundi.
- T7: Yebo, ngiyavuma, okunye engibona kunesidingo ukuba sithole izindlela yoguthu sithole imali ukuze sithenge izinsiza-sifundo.
- T1: Kufanele futhi nokuba sixhasane ukuze nabanye othisha bavele obala uma banezinkinga.

R: Yimaphi amakhono anibona anganenza niphumelele ngokuphele?

- T2: Anginasiqiniseko (kungathi akaqinisekile) ngicabanga ukhuthi sidinga ubuciko

bokukhulumisana kahle ngoba sizobe sifundisa abanye othisha kanye nabazali nanye nabafundi.

- T5: Kufanele sibe nolwazi ukuze sikwazi ukude sivivinya izinhlelo zethu ukuze sibone ukuthi ziyasebenza noma qha.
- T3: Kunjani ukwakhiwa kwamaqembu?
- T1: Ngiyakuvumela uma singakwazi ukubambisana sizohlangabezana nezinkinga.
- T4: Ngicabanga ukuthi ukuqeqeshwa njalo-njalo kuyisidingo esikhulu.
- T6: Ngabe usho i-in-service training?
- T7: Yebo, kanye nokukwazi ukuqhuba ama-workshop ngoba sizobe sifundisa umphakhathi kanye nabafundi.

R: Yiziphi izimo ezidingekayo ukuze ukudidiyela kusebenze ngempumelelo?

- T5: Sidinga othisha abenele ukuze singabi nabafundi abanengi emaklasini.
- T2: Njengoba u T5 eseshilo ngaphambili, uma abafundi belingene sizokhazi ikunika lowo nalowo mfundi ithuba alidingayo.
- T6: Isikole sidinga ukulungiswa ukuze izidingo zabo bonke abafundi zifezeke.
- T1: Ngeke zifezeke izidingo zabo bonke abafundi uma uhlelo lwemfundo lungaguqulwa (iqembu liyavuma).

R: Yiziphi izingqinamba ezingaphazamisa inqubekela phambili?

- T4: Ukungabi nolwazi olunzulu.
- T2: Uma kungalinganiswa kahle amanani abafundi notisha.
- T3: Uma singatholi ukuxhaswa othisha abangochwepheshe.
- T7: Ukungaxhaswa abazali nomphakathi.

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Interview with Parents

R: What is your understanding of Inclusive Education?

P1: It means accepting all learners as they are. We have discussed it but we have realised that we have no resources yet and our teachers are not trained to teach such children. This kind of education needs specialised training (the group nods). You can not just take any ordinary teacher and throw him in a class because he will expect this child who has a disability to behave like an ordinary child, whereas, the child has a disability of sight or hearing and all this difficulties need a specially trained teacher. Even access to the school would be a problem for example, a child on the wheel chair (facilities) stairs- no ramps.

R: Ladies what are your opinions?

P3: It does not mean that we do not like children with disabilities, but just like what P1 has explained, what is important is that we have no relevant facilities and teachers are not trained on how to teach them but we as members of the community as parents we welcome the idea because we would like them to play together so that they can get used to each other.

P2: Not that they should go to a different school like Takalane (school for mentally handicapped children in Soweto) and when they go to their different schools then were are discriminating against them. They should attend school near their homes.

P1: They must have a sense of belonging.

P4: Parents should also feel comfortable unlike those who take their child to Takalane... they feel inferior about it.

P6: Takalane itself is not right because it is a segregatory school. These children see themselves as outcasts.

R: As members of the Centre-of-Learning Based Team, what do you think your needs are in order to implement the policy of inclusion?

P3: To be able to support teachers especially in class when the need arises.

P4: To motivate teachers and learners.

P5: As parents we need to educate the community about inclusion.

P2: I agree with P5 but feel that we cannot educate the community if we do not have knowledge on inclusion.

P1: Yes, when we are trained, it is going to be easy to share the knowledge with other parents who are not the centre-of-learning based team.

R: What skills do you think will enable you to be effective?

P2: Seeing that we will be working with a lot of people in the community, I feel that we are going to need communication skill training.

P6: We also need to be trained in conflict management so that if the teachers experience conflict among themselves then we can be able to assist.

P5: What about team management? (They appeared puzzled)

P3: I think we must also be able to assess or evaluate how severe the child's disability is.

P1: But how can we be able to evaluate if specialist such as speech therapists are not supporting us?

P4: Do you mean they should also be included in the team?

P1: Yes, it will be most appropriate if they form part of the team.

R: What conditions would be required to implement the policy of inclusion?

P1: As I have explained earlier, we need to renovate the school to meet the needs of all learners.

P2: Maybe we should invite people from the Department of Education to come and help the team in changing the curriculum.

P1: My understanding is that teachers are not yet trained on how to work with these children, so the training will help them to know how to work with these children especially when the curriculum is changed.

- P6: I agree with you, and also think that the department must employ more teachers because it is not going to be easy for teachers who have 50 children in their classes.
- P5: I think that children should be prepared before hand so those children with disabilities can be accepted (the group agrees).
- P3: Yes, maybe the parents should be educated before their children so that they can prepare their children to understand why these children should be accommodated in their schools.



R: Niqondani ngemfundo edidiyelayo?

P1: Kusho ukwamukela abafundi njengoba benjalo. Bese siluxoxile lolu daba, nokhu sibone ukhuthi asikabi nezinto eziyisidingo ukuze kusebenzeke kanthi futhi nothisha abaqeqeshelwe lolu hlobo lwabafundi. Lolu hlobo lwemfundo ludinga ukuqeqeshwa olukhethekile (iqembu liyavuma). Ungeke ulokotho uthathe utisha ongaqeqeshelwe laba bafundi umfake eklasini ngoba uyosuke alindele ukuba laba bafundi bafane nalaba abangena zinkinga. Ekubeni ingane eyithulu naleyo eyisimungulu idinga uthisha oqeqeshiwe. Ingani nokungena nje esikoleni kuyinkinga kumfundi oqhutshwa ngenqola ngoba isikole singanawo emalungiselelo afanele.

R: Makhosikazi ninamiphi imibono?

P3: Akusho ukuthi siyabaxwaya abaxhwalile, njengoba sekuchaziwe, kubalulekile ukuba kuhlangtshwezwe izimo ezithile kuqala kanye notisha baqeqeshelwe lolu hlobo lwabafundi. Nokho thina malunga omphakathi nabazali siyawamukela lo mqondo wokubadidiyela ndawonye ngoba abafundi bazodlala ndawonye ngalokho bajwayelane.

P2: Akubalulekile ukuba behlukaniswe ngezikolo njenge Takalani (isikole osabakhubazeke ngokumqondo, e Soweto) uma beya ezikoleni ngokwehlukana kwazo bayabandlululwa.

Kuhle bafunde ezikoleni ezibude buduze namakhaya abo.

P1: Kufanele bazizwe bamukelekile.

P4: Nabazali kufanele bakhuhuleke kunabazali abayisa izingane zabo eTakalani... bebe bezinyeza ngalokho.

P6: I-Takalani ayilungile ngoba iyahlukanisa. Lezi zingane zizibona zilahliwe.

R: Njengamalungu eqembu le centre-of-learning, yiziphi izidingo zenu ukuze uhlelo lokudidiyela lusebenze?

P3: Ukuxhasa othisha emaklasisi uma kudingekile.

P4: Ukufaka othisha nabafundi umdlandla.

P5: Thina bazali kufanele sifundise umphakathi ngohlelo lokudidiyela.

P2: Ngiyavumelana no P5, kodwa ngeke sifundise umphakathi uma singanalo ilwazi olwanele ngalolu hlelo lokudidiyela.

P1: Yebo, uma sesiqeqeshiwe kuyoba lula ukubonisana nabanye abazali abangekho kuleliqembu le centre-of-learning.

R: Yimaphi amakhono enicabanga ukuthi angaba wusizo ukuze kusebenzeke kahle?

P2: Ngoba siyobe sisebenza nabantu abaningi emphakathini, ngiyacabanga ukuthi ikhono lokukwazi lokuxhumana libalulekile.

P6: Siyakudinga ukuba sithole ulwazi ukuse sikwazi ukubhekana nesimo sokungqubuzana uma kukhona ukushayisana phakathi kothisha.

P5: Ukuphathwa kweqembu kona? (Babukeka bemangele).

P3: Kufanele nokuba sikwazi ukubona ukujula kokukhubazeka kwengane.

P1: Singakwazi kanjani uma ama-speech therapist bangazimbandakanyi nathi?

P4: Nisho ukuthi nabo kufanele babemdibimunye nathi?

P1: Yebo, kuyoba kuhle kakhulu uma nabo beseqenjini.

R: Yiziphi izimo ezidingekayo ukuze uhlelo lokudidiyela liphumelele?

P1: Njengoba besengishilo, kufanele ukuba izikole zilungiswe ukuze abafundi basizakale.

P2: Mhlawumbe kufanele simeme abomnyango wezemfundo ukuze basize ngokushintha kohlelo oluladelwayo ezikoleni.

P1: Ngokwami ukuqonda othisha abakaqeqeshelwa ukufundisa lolu hlobo lwabafundi, ukuqeqeshwa kuzobasiza ukuba bakwazi ukusebenza nalaba bafundi ikakhulu uma uhlelo olulandelwayo selushintshiwe.

P6: Ngiyavumelana nawe, futhi kuyoba kuhle ukuba umnyango wezemfundo uqashe othisha abanele ngoba akuzuba lula ukufundisa abafundi abangama-50 amaklasini.

P5: Ngibona kufanele ukuba abafundi balungiselelwe ukuze abafundi abakhubazekile bamukeleke (iqembu liyavuma).

P3: Yebo, mhlawumbe abazali kufanele bafundiswe ukuze bakwazi ukulungiselela izingane zabo ukuba ziqonde kahle ukubaluleka kokwamukelwa kwezingane ezikhubazekileezikoleni.