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INTRODUCTION

My research project was a journey of discovery to me. My intentions of doing this research, was to mainly upgrade my studies and gain accreditation at masters degree level. During this journey I discovered that life is not all about what you have, but what you give is more important.

My desire was to see the class assistants included in any training or development at my school. I also wanted to find out what their needs were and how to address those needs. Currently class assistants are employed without any training as a requirement or experience and the level of education is not an issue.

From my point of view, prior knowledge is essential on how to give support to learners with disabilities, and regular training must be given to the class assistants. This training will be help to empower the assistants with the skills and knowledge needed in supporting and understanding the learners with disabilities.

It can also be used to update the class assistants with changes and new technology used in educating learners with disabilities. It was not an easy road for me, there were challenging times, and sometimes I felt like giving up.

The process of my research project gave a new meaning to my life. I learnt to reflect at my past and present life. My way of doing things changed due to the experience I gained. Doing this project also gave a sense of worth to class assistants by listening and addressing their needs, including them in decision making.

My main aim in conducting my research was to design, implement and report on a life skills program for class assistants in our school using a workshop approach. I wanted to provide a training program that would offer an appropriate support for class assistants who work in schools for learners with disabilities. My project over the past two years has helped me to give a framework for that theory. During the writing of my research project, I tried to show my personal growth and what I have learnt during this process.

In chapter one I explain the background to my research. I attempt to describe my educational values and reasons of doing the research.

Chapter two gives an outline of the context that informs the intellectually challenged learners, and the context of the school in which I work.

Chapter three provides an outline of the research design, the method of enquiry I intend to use and motivation for my choice. Ethical issues will also be discussed.

Chapter four describes my research project. Graphic representation of different research cycles will be provided. It shows how I identify the problem.

Finally my research project ends with chapter five. It shows the significance of the research and its potential implications. How it has contributed to my personal professional learning, and that of others. It shows how it has contributed in improving the practice in my school work place as well as contributing to the wider body of knowledge. Lastly, I try earnestly to pinpoint my present position as I continue my journey as a practitioner researcher on the road to professional development.

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