

**The development of the Teacher Support Team in assisting teachers of learners with special educational needs in one school in Khayelitsha.**

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**A mini thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of M.ED Psychology in the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape.**

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work included in this research project is my own, original work and has not previously been submitted to any other University partially or in its entirety for the purpose of obtaining a degree.

Moliehi Thabana

Signature .....

Date .....



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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of the late family members:

- My grandparents, Majoel Gumede, Mathews and Mapaballo Thabana
- My uncles Zechariah Thabana and Joel Gumede.



## ABSTRACT

This research study explores the process in the development of the TST (Teacher Support Team) in assisting teachers of LSEN (Learners with Special Educational Needs) in the mainstream classroom. This research was conducted in the context of the restructuring of the South African Education system. The Policy Document White Paper 6 (2001) states that all learners irrespective of the barriers to learning and development have a right to be educated in the ordinary school, together with their peers. During the apartheid era, the learners with more severe special needs were placed in special schools or segregated classes. The schools in disadvantaged areas did not have access to these specialist education services and were lacking in materials and human resources.

The study firstly aims to investigate the perceptions and coping skills of teachers of LSEN in identifying and addressing the barriers to learning and development and then the development of TST in one school in a disadvantaged area.



A qualitative research method was used that included the following data collection methods: questionnaires, an interview with members of the TST, and field notes from observation in the classroom and at TST meetings. The responses from the questionnaires, interviews and field notes were summarized, coded into themes and reported in the research findings.

After the intervention, the results are discussed. This study highlights the need for developing an effectively functioning TST in schools, and for improving education support services. The study concludes that only through continued training and capacity building will the school system be equipped to address these barriers. The limitations and strengths of the study are also discussed.

## ACRONYMS

CS	-----	Community Support
D.S.T	-----	District Support Team
ESS	-----	Education Support Services
EMDC	-----	Educational Metropole Development Centre
ILST	-----	Institutional Level Support Team
LSEN	-----	Learners with Special Educational Needs
NCESS	-----	National Committee on Education Support services
NCSNET	-----	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NGO	-----	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQE	-----	National Quality Evaluation
SBTST	-----	School-based Teacher Support Team
SEN	-----	Special Educational Needs
SGB	-----	School Governing Body
T.S.T	-----	Teacher Support Team
UNICEF	---	United Nations Children's Education Fund
WCED	-----	Western Cape education Department



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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1 Introduction

This research study is conducted at a school in Khayelitsha, a densely populated township in Cape Town, South Africa. The context is a sub-economic area that was grossly neglected during the apartheid era. There is a high rate of poverty and unemployment and many social problems exist. The children and youth are considered to be at 'at risk' due to factors such as malnutrition and neglect. In the previous education system, the schools had limited resources and there was no provision of educational support services for learners with special educational needs (LSEN). The main purpose of this research is to investigate the coping skills of teachers who assist LSEN at this particular school, and the process of building the capacity of the teachers and the Teacher Support Team (T.S.T) in supporting LSEN in a specific school.

The new democratic government of 1994 unified the previous 17 education departments which had been separated along racial lines, into a single Ministry of Education. Prior to this there were disparities between the departments and a lack of provision of Education Support Services for LSEN in disadvantaged areas. In 1997, the government appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training as well as the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCSNET/NCESS) to investigate the provision of Special Education and Education Support Services (Naicker, 1999).

Muthukrishna (2000), in discussing the report of the NCSNET / NCESS, argues that a range of barriers exist among learners and within the education system. These barriers should be addressed if effective learning and development is to be provided and sustained in order for the education system to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners. In order to adapt to the system, teachers and the community at large need to accept the challenge, and to change their attitudes towards the transformation.

An important recommendation of NCSNET/NCESS (1997) was to develop Education Support Services at institutional and district levels as well as intersectoral collaboration between different departments and disciplines. The aim was to develop and build the capacity of teachers to deal with the diverse needs of all learners and thereby facilitate the use of limited resources. As stated by Creese, Daniels and Norwich (1996), schools which aim to develop support structures that allow for professional interaction and shared knowledge with fellow teachers, are more likely to have positive outcomes.

Education Support Services include all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners and to other aspects of the system. While these services attempt to minimize and remove barriers to learning and development, they can also focus on the prevention of these barriers and on the development of a supportive learning environment for all learners. (Department of Education, 1997).

Green (2001) states that shared knowledge from different perspectives enriches understanding and can contribute to creative and novel solutions to human problems. This sharing of knowledge is the underlying principle for developing teacher and learner support.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Since the new democratic government aims to give access to quality education for all learners, equal provision of support services and the involvement of all who are in the education system, including the parents, is necessary. This could be achieved by strengthening support services that will give equal provision to all sectors of the education system. The existence of a strengthened and equalised distribution of support services should facilitate the development of Inclusive Education.

The teachers in the mainstream schools are expected to address the diverse needs of all learners in the mainstream classroom. This is stressful and frustrating because the teacher often cannot solve learning problems without the help of an expert. The other reason is that teachers' lack of knowledge of Special Educational Needs (SEN) may result in learners being labelled as 'slow'

and the teacher could consequently ‘blame’ the child. This may contribute to the withdrawal, drop-out or failure of the child. Therefore, the role of Education Support Services becomes vital in assisting teachers to attend to the diverse needs of these learners.

Inadequacies in the training of teachers can lead to learning breakdown because of lack of skills and methods on how to meet the diverse needs of the learners. According to Creese, Daniels and Norwich (1997), providing effectively for the range of learners with special educational needs (LSEN) in particular, requires teachers’ collaboration. Teachers have many demands, including teaching a complex curriculum to a diverse range of pupils in a coherent and meaningful way. Therefore it is vital that teachers collaborate with each other in planning, teaching and managing pupils’ behaviour. This indicates that teachers need support and training on how to deal with LSEN.

In many schools, especially in the lower-income suburbs such as the townships, the teacher/pupil ratio ranges from 1:45 to 1:70. The classes are overcrowded, and it is not easy for the teacher to attend to the needs of every child without help from other colleagues and professionals. The empowerment of teachers, the development of teaching staff and the improvement of the school, is vital to the child’s education.

The situation as described above urged me to investigate the development of Education Support Services, especially the support given to teachers by colleagues in an inclusive setting. This research includes the support provided in developing the Teacher Support Teams (T.S.T) which enhance the teacher’s capacity to deal with the diverse needs of all learners in the mainstream classroom. Creese et al (1997) believe the T.S.T’s should involve the sharing of expertise between colleagues, rather than some teachers acting as experts for others. By supporting teachers, they also provide an opportunity to support learners indirectly. The School-based Teacher Support Team also collaborates with other professionals from the community such as social workers, psychologists and other community role players.

In South Africa, learners with learning difficulties have been mainstreamed without the provision of adequate educational support services. The White Paper 6 (2001) states that LSEN



can be supported in the Inclusive Education system by the establishment of School-Based Teacher Support Teams with help from the community and the District Support Teams (D.S.T).

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

As mentioned earlier, teachers need support from colleagues and other experts to be able to assist LSEN in the classroom. The main aim of this research study is to investigate the perceptions and coping skills of teachers and explore the support available for teachers with particular reference to developing a T.S.T. The secondary aim is to research the process of establishing a T.S.T, a team which is crucial for helping to build the capacity of the teachers as well as for improving the school community at large.

#### **1.3.1 An overview of the study**

**The main aim of the study is:**



a) To investigate the perceptions and coping skills of teachers of LSEN in identifying and addressing the barriers to learning and development.

#### **Secondary aims**

The research also investigates:

- b) The development of knowledge and skills of teaching staff for identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development
- c) The process of establishing the Teacher Support Team.

### **1.4 Background to this Research**

In 1999 a psychologist at the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) School Clinic conducted a needs analysis that revealed the total lack of support services in the Khayelitsha region. The University of the Western Cape (UWC) lecturers from the Faculty of Education

conducted a series of workshops for teachers from the primary schools on how to set up a T.S.T and make use of D.S.T. Two teachers from each school attended and they were expected to establish a T.S.T. The Learning Support Facilitators from the School Clinic also participated. The idea was to support these teachers and establish T.S.T's at primary schools.

The research was conducted in Khayelitsha, a township located in the Western Cape Province on the outskirts of Cape Town. The location was a primary school at Site C. Although the school has many learners with special needs, there were no children with severe physical or sensory disabilities. The special educational needs refer mainly to scholastic, cognitive and behavioural difficulties with the exception of one learner in Grade Three who had a hearing impairment.

### **1.5 The Theoretical framework: Eco-Systemic Theory**

The Ecosystemic Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) provides the theoretical framework for this study, and is the theory used to explain child development. It views development as a joint function between person and environment. This theory complements the underlying assumptions of Inclusive Education, in that the child has to be viewed in the context of his home, his cultural environment and the school system. From the ecosystemic perspective, the links between the school, family and community have to be considered when learners have special needs. The Education Support Services that are vital for inclusion to succeed have to cater for learners' diversity with a systems approach. Thus the T.S.T will be concerned not only with scholastic performance but also environmental factors and how they impact on scholastic and learning ability or disability. In this way the different levels of the system or sub-systems and their interactions will be considered in relation to the school staff and the learners. The ecosystemic theory in relation to support services will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

### **1.6 Structure of the Teacher Support Team and strategies to address the barriers to learning and development**

The school that was selected for this study had initiated a T.S.T that was structured as described

below, with a convenor from each committee and each Grade being represented on the T.S.T. Prior to setting up the T.S.T, this school had existing committees that were designed to accommodate the diverse needs of the learners and the school communities. In this way the different levels of the system or sub-systems would be considered in relation to the needs of the school and the learners. The committees are categorized as follows: Discipline and behaviour, social and emotional, academic, parental, environment and sports. The school was assisted with the structuring of the T.S.T by the Learning Support Facilitator from the Educational Management Development Centre (EMDC). This was to ensure that the T.S.T was composed of a representative from each of the sub-committees. The function and roles of the committees are described as follows:

- **Discipline and Behavioural Committee**

The members of the committee maintained that they create a disciplined environment in their school by involving learners in drawing up the code of conduct. Representatives from each educational phase participated in the process. They encouraged learners to form a debating society in which they can participate and express themselves. The committee expects learners to accept responsibility when they violate the rules. The committee also maintained that they give lessons to the learners by grouping them according to their Phases and teaching them conflict-resolution skills. They invite guest speakers (e.g. a policeman) to address the children on drug abuse, theft, gangsterism and crime.

- **Social and Emotional Committee**

This committee motivates social interaction and communication between learners and how to form lasting friendships. The committee encourages teachers to teach learners life skills such as problem-solving, creative thinking and resilience. The committee deals with learners who have emotional problems or who cannot cope with the loss of a parent or a close relative. Learners who are physically or emotionally abused are given counselling. Learners are encouraged to attend social gatherings with other learners from different schools for events such as soccer competitions, debates or athletics. The committee also encourages the teachers to introduce role-playing, a drama society and storytelling. The social activities also involve learners in different sports, end-of-year outings and in creating parental awareness.

- **Parental Involvement Committee**

This committee maintained that they usually invite the parents to school to discuss their children's education. They also help parents by advising them about assisting the children at home. The aim of the parental involvement committee is to empower parents by giving them information about their children's learning so that they are in a better position to understand ways in which professionals work together to help the learners. The parents help in the garden and with a feeding scheme for the learners during break time.

- **Environmental Committee**

The Environmental committee encourages cleanliness in the classroom and around the schoolyard. They encourage the children to turn the school into an exciting and vibrant environment. The committee does this by inviting the children and the teachers to attend a cleaning campaign at the end of every month. They also invite guest speakers from Environmental Health to address the children about how to live in a healthy environment. Children are taught to do gardening for beautification of the landscape and for a living. The committee introduced a water week whereby children are taught to conserve and save water. During Arbor Day each child is given a tree to plant at school.

- **Academic (literacy and numeracy) Committee**

The Literacy committee helps the learners to choose books during Mobile library week. The NGO also held workshops for teachers on how to teach learners who cannot read. They demonstrated paired reading to teachers so that they could introduce it to learners and thereby help each other. Teachers are encouraged to help children to write their own books and to create their own story by looking at the pictures. Professionals from EMDC of the Department of Education have also supported them by holding workshops on reading and writing.

- **Recommended Procedure for referral to the T.S.T**

Each convenor from the various committees as described above is represented on the T.S.T and gives feedback from the committees to the T.S.T.

The following is the procedure recommended by the T.S.T for referrals:

Stage 1. The teacher attempts to handle the problem within the classroom.

- Stage 2. The teacher discusses the problem with the other grade teachers.
- Stage 3. The classroom teacher gathers information regarding personal and scholastic problems and refers the learner to the T.S.T.
- Stage 4. When the learner is referred to the T.S.T. the team members familiarize themselves with the problem and hold joint group discussions together with the class teacher. With the help from colleagues, the Individual Education Plan can then be designed.

## **Report layout**

### **Chapter One**

The introductory chapter deals with the background to and rationale of this study. It also outlines the statement of the problem, the theoretical framework, the purpose and aims and the scope of the study.



### **Chapter Two**

This chapter focuses on a comprehensive literature review of teacher and learner support. Models for support for teachers and LSEN in the South African context are explained, as well as models used in Africa and internationally.

### **Chapter Three**

In this chapter the qualitative research methods are described. These are the processes and methods used in gathering and analysing data for this research study.

### **Chapter Four**

This chapter contains the results and findings and presents the analysis of data. The barriers to learning and development are discussed and the strategies used to overcome the barriers are mentioned. The recommendations for addressing the barriers mentioned by the participants are explained.

## **Chapter Five**

This is the concluding chapter in which the results of the research findings and recommendations for future research are discussed. Reference is also made to the limitations and strengths of the research.



## Chapter Two

### Literature review of learners with special educational needs

#### 2. Introduction

This chapter surveys the literature review of collaborative support systems in Inclusive Education, both nationally and internationally. Research studies in this field as summarized, explain the barriers to learning and development. Programmes and the practice of different models of support both within and outside the school will be discussed. A systemic approach to developing educational support services will be the framework for this research. It is envisaged that learners and schools are supported at each level of the system including the interaction between home and school support.

#### 2.1 Towards an understanding of Inclusive Education



Inclusive Education means that learners with diverse needs should be accommodated in the ordinary classroom together with their peers. The idea of Inclusion emerged at a conference held in Salamanca, Spain. The conference was attended by 360 delegates representing 92 countries (UNESCO, 1994). Those present stated that:

- Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an accepted level of learning
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs
- Education should be designed and the educational programmes which are implemented should take into account the wide diversity of these needs
- Those with Special Educational Needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them with a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs
- Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

Inclusive Education is therefore based on a value system that recognises and celebrates the diversity arising from gender, race, level of disability and social background (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001). It is a new way of looking at education, which leads to an understanding that the society shall accommodate all learners regardless of disability, race, culture and gender. Inclusion means opportunities for all pupils to participate in and be part of a whole school life and society. The requirements for full inclusion are: access to a curriculum that accommodates the learner, social inclusion that means interacting with other children i.e. their peers; and the availability of both material and human resources. Inclusive Education implies that the focus is on overcoming barriers in the system which prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs (White Paper 6, 2001).

Inclusion therefore strives to remove the barriers to effective teaching and learning. It is the development of good teaching methods and a curriculum that favors the child and that will be to the benefit of all learners. The concept of inclusion means that the system needs to change to meet the diverse needs of the learner and to improve educational provision. This is a shift from mainstreaming where the learner was integrated and expected to 'fit' into the system.



## **2.2 Historical overview of the development towards Inclusive Education.**

In this section the researcher will first discuss the international trends and then give an overview of policy development in South Africa.

### **2.2.1 Historical overview of international policy development and the reconceptualisation of special needs**

According to Stainback and Stainback (1992), full inclusive thinking argues that all children must be served in the regular classroom at all times. This philosophy is primarily derived from the consideration of civil rights issues and the rights of all children to be educated together. Inclusion therefore offers a mixed group interaction that fosters understanding and acceptance of individual differences. According to Allen (2001), inclusion is about belonging to a community, a group of friends, a school or a neighbourhood.



Inclusive Education is concerned with providing quality education with special emphasis on all marginalised groups that experience barriers to learning and participation. This includes those learners within the system who have not yet received a quality education to suit their needs.

According to Moore and Wade (1992), under Public law 94:142 in the USA, free and equal public education was made available to children with disabilities. As far as placement was concerned, the principles of this law state unequivocally that: A handicapped child shall, as much as possible, be taught in the mainstream classroom with his/her peer group. If the child's needs can be accommodated in the mainstream classroom (with the support of additional services, materials, aids and special equipment), then the child must be placed in the regular classroom with children who are not handicapped. Only when the child's handicap is too severe for appropriate education as indicated by these principles, may other resources be considered. The guiding principle, therefore, as the legislation ensures, is that the child is placed in the 'least restrictive' possible environment.



Moore and Wade (1992), also refer to Britain where there were two important precursors to the 1981 Education Act. Firstly, the report of the Warnock Committee, Special Educational Needs (D.E.S, 1978), signified an important departure from labeling children according to handicaps that were medically diagnosed. The Committee insisted that about 20% of all children required special help at some time during their schooling and this argument led naturally to the notion of a continuum between handicapped and non-handicapped rather than a strict division into separate categories which the previous legislation of the 1944 Act had assumed. Thus anyone with learning difficulties is regarded as having special needs. In the Salamanca statement (1994), inclusion of LSEN was accepted in principle by 94 countries.

### **2.2.2 National education policy development in South Africa**

There is evidence that educational thinking in South Africa has been strongly influenced by international trends. In the early 1960's, children were categorized according to their physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities. According to Moore and Wade (1992), the mainstream

teachers frequently hold stereotyped views about what particular pupils could achieve. These limiting prejudices often derive from class, race or gender preconceptions.

As cited in Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001), the Central Statistics Services in the Government Census (1996) confirmed the strong relationship between poverty and disability since 80% of Black children who are disabled, lived in extreme poverty. Provision for these children was scarce: learners were placed in special schools that were segregated along racial lines and which mostly catered for whites. This 'model' of categorization located the deficit in the learner and resulted in interventions which were mostly curative. In order to redress the injustices of the past, the education section of the South Africa Bill of Rights (1996) states that all learners have a right to basic education including adult basic education and further education.

“The issue of integration in education in South Africa can be seen as another level, by moving away from a segregated special education system into an integrated system where special needs and support services shift from the boundary to becoming more centrally infused into general education. With the transformation of the unified general system there is thus a growing practice towards ensuring the inclusion of learners with special educational needs into a mainstream of education”(Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001).

The Education Policy in South Africa is directed at redressing inequalities and deficits of the past. In the past there was a movement towards integration of special education into mainstreaming. Integration involves preparing pupils for placement in ordinary mainstream schools where the pupil must be able to adapt to the school. The shift to inclusion is regarded as a moral issue of human rights and values and asserts that the curriculum must be made accessible to accommodate the learner. Inclusion is based on a value system that recognizes and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background and level of education achievement or disability.

Muthukrishna, (2000), who conducted research in Kwazulu-Natal, stated that since 1994, the new democratic government has been committed to transforming the educational policy in order to address the imbalances and neglect of the past. The policy documents and legislation that

have emerged stress the principles of social justice, quality education for all, the right to basic education, equality of opportunity and redress of the past educational inequalities among those sections of the people who suffered most, or who are specially vulnerable. These include street children, out-of-school youth, the disabled, citizens with special educational needs, illiterate woman, rural communities, squatter communities and communities damaged by violence (Department of Education, 1995).

The White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995), states that education and training are basic rights. It emphasises the involvement of parents and caregivers in the education of their children. It further states that parents have the right to choose the form of education which is suitable for their children, especially in the early years of schooling. Lifelong learning is valued and children should be given access to quality education. The South African Constitution guarantees equal access to basic education for all. It emphasises the redress of educational inequalities among people, especially those who have been marginalised including street children, out of school youth, the disabled and LSEN.



The legislation cited in the South African School Act (Department of Education, 1996), supports the notion of compulsory education for every learner regardless of disability, from the first school day of the year at the age of seven until the last school day of the year in which such a learner reaches the age of fifteen or the ninth grade. In addition, it is legislated that the public schools admit all learners and serve educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way. The Act emphasises the involvement of parents and community members and the rights and wishes of parents, especially parents of learners with special educational needs who have the right to choose a school for their children.

The Green Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) includes the principle that all learners have the right to equal access to the widest possible educational opportunities. The legislation strongly recommends provision of life-skills training for independent living and a flexible curriculum that accommodates all learners. The legislation further recommends that people with disability have the same fundamental rights and responsibilities as any other citizen.

The NCSNET/NCESS (DOE, 1997) strongly recommends a shared vision in order to propose a single set of recommendations on the creation and support of an education system that would be responsive to all learners. The intention is to address historical imbalances such as inadequate Education Support Services. The commission focuses on the involvement of all those who are responsible in the education system to work together as partners. In addition, Education Support Services must be provided to those who are most needy, and who have formerly been segregated along racial lines.

The National Education Policy Investigation in South Africa (NEPI, 1992) recommended a framework for the provision of support services that would be holistic and that would require collaboration between everyone involved in the education system, in order to give quality education to all children regardless of their disability. This implies that teachers, parents, volunteers, psychologists, social workers and other professionals should provide quality education to all learners as they work together towards a similar vision. According to the systemic approach promoted by the NCSNET/NCESS, barriers may be located within the learner, within the centre of learning or school, within the educational system and/or within the broader social, economic and political context (Department of Education, 1997).

### **2.3 The ecosystemic perspective**

Ecosystemic Theory provides the framework for this research study because it focuses on human development, participation and social interaction, including society, family and school, all of which are factors that contribute to the development of a child. According to Gains (1991:72) “Systems Theory suggests that the child must be viewed as the product of a system of units that interact and the child’s behaviour is the product of multiple causes rather than a unitary cause.”

“The ecosystemic perspective has evolved out of a blend of ecological and system theories” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). “Its main concern is to show how individual people and groups at different levels of the social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationships” (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1997:34). An interaction in family and community life helps to develop children. There should be links between the school, the family

and the community as a whole. If there is a change in the family or school, this could affect the whole system and the child will likewise be affected. Ecosystemic thinking focuses on the interactions between the individual child, the school, the family, the child's peers and the community. The child needs to be understood at different levels of the system; within the context of the family background, the environmental context, the school he/she attends and as part of the interactions between society and the environment. The idea is that if one component of the system has no regard for the total system, a negative effect on the learner can result. This perspective presents a conceptual shift from a linear causal model, which focuses primarily on the individual to a circular systemic model in which learning difficulties are interpreted in the context of the interaction between different levels of the system. The ecosystemic perspective is complementary to Inclusive Education.

The establishment and development of the T.S.T is designed to attend to the needs of the LSEN. These needs are diverse and may stem from factors within the learner or from the environment e.g. the family culture, or from the interaction of personal and environmental factors. This acknowledges that the learner forms part of the bigger system and the T.S.T needs to be viewed in the broader context so that it can operate within the school and in collaboration with the D.S.T and community and voluntary organisations. The Education White Paper 6 (2001) recommended a three-tier level of support services

- i) The School-based Support Team (T.S.T)
- ii) The District Support Team (DST)
- iii) Intersectoral Collaboration between the different Government Departments.

This structuring of support services complements an ecosystemic perspective, because it incorporates the different levels of the education system.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) may be due to multiple causes including intrinsic factors as well as environmental factors. The following is the conceptual continuum of special educational needs (NEPI, 1992):

**a) Intrinsic special educational needs**

This refers to those with an intrinsic disability of a physical or neurological nature.

Traditionally, highly specialised education resources and assistance on a relatively permanent basis, provided for those types of educational needs. Disabilities would include severe and chronic physical disabilities, sensory loss, neurological disabilities, moderate and severe mental handicaps, as well as various combinations of these.

**b) Extrinsic special educational needs**

This refers to those learners with socio-educational disadvantages, who need special education support on a temporary basis within a restructured mainstream education. These learners have not acquired adequate basic educational skills and did not receive proper support from the system.

**c) Interactive special educational needs**

This refers to the interaction between both intrinsically and extrinsically-generated special educational needs. These vary in severity, chronicity, and the type of resources that need to be provided. Included in this group are mild mental handicaps, learning disabilities, speech and language difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, and various combinations of these. This means the focus should not only be on the learners but on the system as a whole. The report of NCSNET and NCESS (1997) argues that a range of needs exist between the learner and the education system, and that these needs must be met if effective learning and development is to be provided and sustained.

In summary, SEN may be due to multiple causes such as the barrier that may be within the learner or in the education system as a whole. In order to understand the individual differences of learners, the factors which cause learning breakdown will be discussed. The barriers to learning, as discussed in the next session, link with systems theory and a systemic approach to understanding the barriers.

The following table is a summary of the estimated number of pupils with Special Educational Needs in South Africa in 1990 (NEPI, 1992:31).

**Table 2.1**

African	White	Coloured	Indian	Total
C- 492 934	60 033	54 186	15 012	622 166
R-765 427	60 033	54 186	15 013	894 659
C-765 425	93 219	84 140	23 311	966 095
R-1 148 140	93 219	84 140	23 311	1348 810
C-1 487 936	-	-	-	1 487 936
R-1 930 728	-	-	-	1 930 728
C-2 746 295	153 252	138 326	38 323	3 076 197
R-3 844 295	153 252	138 326	38 324	4 174 197

Key: C = conservative, R = real. (NEPI, 1992,31).

Special Educational Needs are more prevalent in African than in other races in South Africa. This is because of the lack of Special Educational Needs (SEN) service provision in African schools and communities. Services have been well provided for the minority and advantaged sectors, but grossly neglected in the majority and disadvantaged sectors where they were needed most. The provision of support services in South Africa has therefore not applied to the majority of black learners. As illustrated in Table 2.1, extrinsically generated special need is the greatest amongst the African population.

## **2.4 Barriers to learning and development**

The factors that lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity and which lead to learning breakdown or prevent learners from accessing educational provision have been conceptualized as barriers to learning and development (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997). These barriers as identified by NCSNET/NCESS (1997) may be due to the following: socio-economic conditions, negative attitudes, inflexible curriculum, language, an inaccessible and unsafe built environment, inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services, lack of enabling and protective legislation and policy, lack of parental recognition and involvement, disabilities (i.e. physical, sensory or intellectual impairment) and the lack of human resource development. Each barrier is explained as follows:

### **2.4.1 Socio-economic barriers**

The NCSNET/NCESS (1997) stated that effective learning is influenced by the availability of educational resources. In South Africa, socio-economic disadvantages have a negative effect on education and all aspects of social development in the majority of the population due to the lack of access to basic services and various other factors, all of which place learners 'at risk'. The effect of sustained poverty becomes a self-perpetuating cycle, due to poor living conditions such as under-nourishment, overcrowded housing and unemployment (Donald et al.1997). Consequently, the socio-economic status of the community affects the quality of education provided, especially to learners with SEN, as often no special education provision has been made for them, such as social workers and language therapists.

### **2.4.2 Attitude**

Discriminatory attitudes, which result in prejudice on the basis of race, class, gender, culture, language, religion and disability, could become barriers when they are directed towards the learners in the education system. Negative attitudes and labelling result from fear and lack of awareness about the particular needs of the learner with a disability. The negative attitude may arise when the child is born and the parents have difficulty in accepting a child which has a disability. This results in the child not accepting him/herself due to non-acceptance at home. The other barriers may include cultural beliefs, resistance to change and ignorance and may exist at all levels of the education system including the policy designers, the attitudes of teachers and the community at large. Negative attitudes may also arise from learners who attend school with a SEN learner. The negative behaviours of other learners can lower the self-confidence of LSEN.

### **2.4.3 Inflexible curriculum**

An inflexible curriculum, lack of relevant subject knowledge and the lack of appropriate learning and teaching materials, potentially lead to learning breakdown and school drop-out. Untrained or inadequately trained teachers can lead to learning breakdown and the exclusion of



learners with special educational needs. Lack of skills and methods of teaching needed to meet the diverse needs of all learners, also leads to learning breakdown and school drop-out. The other barriers that prevent learners from accessing the curriculum may be due to the inadequate provision of materials or equipment such as assistive devices (e.g. hearing aids or audio equipment).

#### **2.4.4 Language and communication**

Language may be another barrier encountered in the curriculum if teaching and learning for many learners takes place through a language, which is not their mother tongue. Second and third language learners are often subjected to low expectations and discrimination. Sign language is not provided for deaf learners and there is a lack of assistive devices. Teachers experience difficulties in developing appropriate support materials for second language learners. In addition, when the language is used in derogatory ways to name or identify learners (e.g. by calling them stupid), this can lead to learning breakdown. Learners who are non-speaking due to the severity of their special needs, experience enormous barriers to learning and development if these needs are not addressed by the system.



#### **2.4.5 Inaccessible and unsafe built environment**

Inaccessible and unsafe buildings are barriers to learning due to the lack of ramps to provide physical access to the classroom, especially for learners with wheelchairs.

#### **2.4.6 Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services**

Inappropriate and inadequate support services can lead to learning breakdown and exclusion. For example this may occur where the nature of the service is focused on the problem in the learner rather than on the problem in the system. This barrier may exist because of a lack of coordinated Education Support Services and intervention. The nature of the intervention may lead to a learner being removed from a learning environment rather than addressing the problem which may exist in the environment. The lack of a shared understanding of special educational needs and the fear of dealing with a diverse range of needs, results in inadequate support.

### **2.4.7 Lack of parental recognition and involvement**

Lack of parental involvement in a centre of learning, low levels of empowerment and participation in community services, can all be a barrier to the effective learning of the child. The active involvement of parents and the broader community in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development. Lack of parental involvement, especially parents of LSEN, may lead to learning breakdown. Such involvement means giving recognition to parents as the primary caregivers of their children. Parents need to feel confident that they have worthwhile skills, views and attributes which contribute to their children's learning.

### **2.4.8 Lack of human resources development**

The inadequate training of teachers who are not equipped to meet the diverse needs of the learner, can lead to learning breakdown and drop-out. The absence of ongoing in-service training for educators often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem and a lack of innovative practices in the classroom. This may result in harmful attitudes towards learners with special educational needs.



### **2.4.9 Disabilities**

For learners with disabilities, learning breakdown occurs when their particular needs are not met as a result of the barriers in the learning environment or broader society. Disabilities such as a severe intellectual impairment may prevent the learner from engaging in learning. Learning breakdown can also occur when the learner's self esteem is low because of his/her disability. The learner may feel inferior when he or she realises that he/she has some kind of disability.

### **2.4.10 Lack of protective legislation and policy**

A constitution that fails to protect learners from discrimination and inequality, directly contributes to the existence of barriers to learning. In order to address the problem of this particular barrier, the following strategies are discussed and should be taken into account. They are based on the principle of collaborative problem-solving and team approaches to the provision of Education Support Services (ESS).

## 2.5 Collaboration as a means of addressing the barriers

### Introduction

In the South African context, the model of support is based on the principles of support provision by schools, community and the education system as a whole. This is a systemic approach that recognizes the contribution of the school system, and the collaboration between the different partners.

The many barriers experienced by the learners, are located in the system of education. In order to address the barriers to learning and development, the system of education should be redesigned to become child-centred and give access to education for disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Education should be more flexible and relevant. The EWP6 (2001) emphasises the development of school-based Teacher Support Teams in order to address the barriers to learning and participation. These teams aim to develop collaboration between the community and the school and the involvement of professionals from both within and outside the school. As mentioned by Campher, Engelbrecht, Hall, Oswald and Smith (1999:162), “working in teams has benefits for the individual and the school as a whole”.

Such provision of educational support services for all children would improve the quality and efficiency of education. Barriers can be removed by involving more experts and by utilising existing resources to share ideas and experiences.

According to Stainback and Stainback (1992), a key underlying feature for inclusive classroom success is collaboration among teachers, other school personnel, parents and students. Without collaboration, Inclusive Education cannot work since inclusion is dependent upon professionals working together for the purpose of enhancing the education of all students in the school. For Inclusive Education to work, teachers should work together with each other and with other professionals for the benefit of the learner. Collaboration between parents, teachers and other professionals is often seen to be the key to successful learning. Therefore, it is important that parents and teachers establish good relationships with each other.

Stainback and Stainback (1992) maintain that collaborative problem-solving provides the support network by which interventions, adaptations and accommodations are implemented in the inclusive classroom. In the inclusive school, everybody that has a say in education is involved, such as parents and the community at large. When teachers, professionals and the community collaborate to develop strategies to help the child to succeed, they are working together towards a shared goal. Central to effective collaboration is the development and maintenance of a positive, trusting relationship among the collaborators. Each member of the team should feel free to share ideas and to have a feeling of belonging. One teacher's skills may be of value to another teacher and all learners should benefit instead of one group of learners.

The development and functioning of an inter-disciplinary team of Education Support Services is largely determined by the school's acceptance of the idea of a working partnership between educationists, health and social workers (Archer, 1994). Creating an inclusive learning school requires a supportive community, a sense of belonging, whole school development and a shared vision. When people are working together for a common purpose, quality decisions can be reached. This implies that without collaboration of all involved at the different levels of the education system, Inclusive Education may not be successful since inclusion is premised on the notion of professionals working together to eliminate or remove the barriers to learning and development. Collaboration between the role players is crucial in that the child receives help within an ordinary classroom, whereas previously the child was given individual help from a special needs teacher. In order to address the barriers to learning and development, there is a need for the provision of Education Support Services. The support services offered in South African schools, districts and at provincial level, are discussed in the next section.

### **2.5.1 Towards Support Services in the Inclusive School in South Africa**

Education Support Services include all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners and all aspects of the system. While these services attempt to minimize 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 (Department of Education, 1997).

White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001) recommends the development of a three-tier support system. The first level includes the development of school-based support teams, whose function it is to identify and address specific barriers to learning through problem-solving. This team will support learning and teaching by identifying and addressing educator and learner needs.

At the next level are District Support Services (D.S.T) should be inter disciplinary and includes officers from the Educational Metropole District Center (EMDC). The establishment of D.S.T serves to provide professional experts who collaborate with the School-Based Support Teams. The aim of the D.S.T is to make use of all available resources from the community (local and educational) to address the needs of the school-based team and to develop the capacity of teaching and learning. The D.S.T provides integrated support to early childhood centres, schools, colleges and adult learning centres to support the development of effective teaching and learning.

The focus of the D.S.T is also to introduce in-service training for all involved in the education system, in order to upgrade their knowledge and skills and to provide a framework for service delivery at district level and learning sites. Professionals can play a vital role in building effective teaching and learning and in designing a flexible curriculum in order to address the barriers to learning and encourage the participation of learners. The participation of educational psychologists, social workers, school counsellors and school nurses can be fruitful to teachers and learners as each bring unique experiences, skills and knowledge to each other.

The third level focuses on intersectoral collaboration between the different Government Departments, which includes departments such as Education, Health Services, Social Services, Correctional Services and Labour. These sectors all offer human resources and services that could support the system and work in a co-ordinated way to address the barriers to learning and development. The development of competencies in all sections of Provincial Government Departments is also necessary. Lazarus, Moolla and Reddy (1996) state that in intersectoral collaboration, the players bring to the process resources, perspectives, skills and knowledge, which merge together to act as a catalyst for change and improvement. Intersectoral

collaboration allows multiple problems to be addressed through multiple-level solutions by means of a comprehensive understanding of issues that include prevention and promotion.

According to Brickler and Solity (1994), the basis for positive collaboration lies in professionals developing policies that specify aims and objectives and mechanisms for planning, delivering and managing services in a co-ordinated way, drawing on the skills and expertise of parents, as well as those of different professional groups. Many support services advise others on how to manage problems rather than deal with them directly themselves, for example Psychiatrists may work with other health workers, while educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and advisory teachers may organize in-service training courses for teachers. If prevention is better than cure, then the above-mentioned services are crucial for effective teaching and learning to occur. Teachers need competencies to learn to work together with other professionals. When other experts are involved, teachers would be able to create a school that responds to the diverse needs of the learners.



Vayrynen (2001) stated that if the participation of members of a society is seen as an essential element of living together, it is probable that power would be widely distributed among people and society's structures would be likely to promote participation. As such an effort to address the question of participation and inclusion needs to be set in the network of inter-connection power relations in a given community. The effective functioning of a multi-disciplinary team of Educational Support Services personnel is largely determined by the school's acceptance of the idea of different professionals working together. In Inclusive Education, all the resources available in both school and communities must be considered as this may increase the capacity of the school to assist all learners to participate and develop successfully. The school governing bodies can also be a source of support to schools. The South African Schools Act (1996) laid down the principles by which the governors of a school should be guided, thereby creating positive conditions for active parental participation in the decision-making process of schools and for the support groups for parents with children with disability.

### 2.5.2 School-Based Teacher Support Teams and their functions

In this thesis I refer to School-Based Teams as T.S.T s. The T.S.T is an effective group of teachers who identify problems and give support in the mainstream schools. Teachers cannot meet all the challenges alone and need support to face the problems that exist in the schools that includes LSEN. Support can also be obtained from professionals in the D.S.T: these include psychologists, remedial teachers, language and learning support facilitators and therapists. The T.S.T supports class teachers by making recommendations for intervention within the school and classroom. Help to the learner is often provided in the classroom where it is needed most.

The members of the team comprise the principal of the school, members of the teaching staff (class teachers) and specialist teachers. The aim of the school-based T.S.T is to improve the skills of teachers in order to accommodate learners with special educational needs. The primary function of the T.S.T is to support learning by identifying and addressing the barriers to learning and participation, and secondly by mobilizing and accessing support from the community. Through a T.S.T, class teachers are empowered to handle the difficulties they face in their everyday teaching by delivering indirect services to learners. The establishment of such School-Based Teams is important for building the capacity of the educators and the school community in order to meet individual needs.

The T.S.T aims are to empower the class teachers and to build the capacity of teachers. The goal of the Teacher Support Teams is to strive for a more efficient and effective delivery of special help to children by placing the initiative for action in the hands of classroom teachers (Chalfant and Pysh 1979). This can be achieved by:

- a) Empowering and supporting classroom teachers to serve learners with learning and behavioural problems more effectively by utilizing the resources of the staff and consulting the multi-disciplinary team,
- b) Encouraging teachers to share expertise and consult with one another and to benefit from one another's experience and areas of specialty.

Hanko (1990:44-46) mentions the following aims and functions of Teacher Support Teams:

- a) To engage in structured and joint problem-solving,
- b) To initiate early intervention and thereby prevent inappropriate referrals to outside agencies.

According to Hanko (1990), the aim of the T.S.T is to enhance teachers' interprofessional skills needed to collaborate with colleagues. Through sharing, and thus maximising their expertise, they can contribute to each other and their own effectiveness. Through mutual support they can sharpen recognition and deepen understanding of the needs that underlie emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties and develop the skills required during an ordinary teaching day.

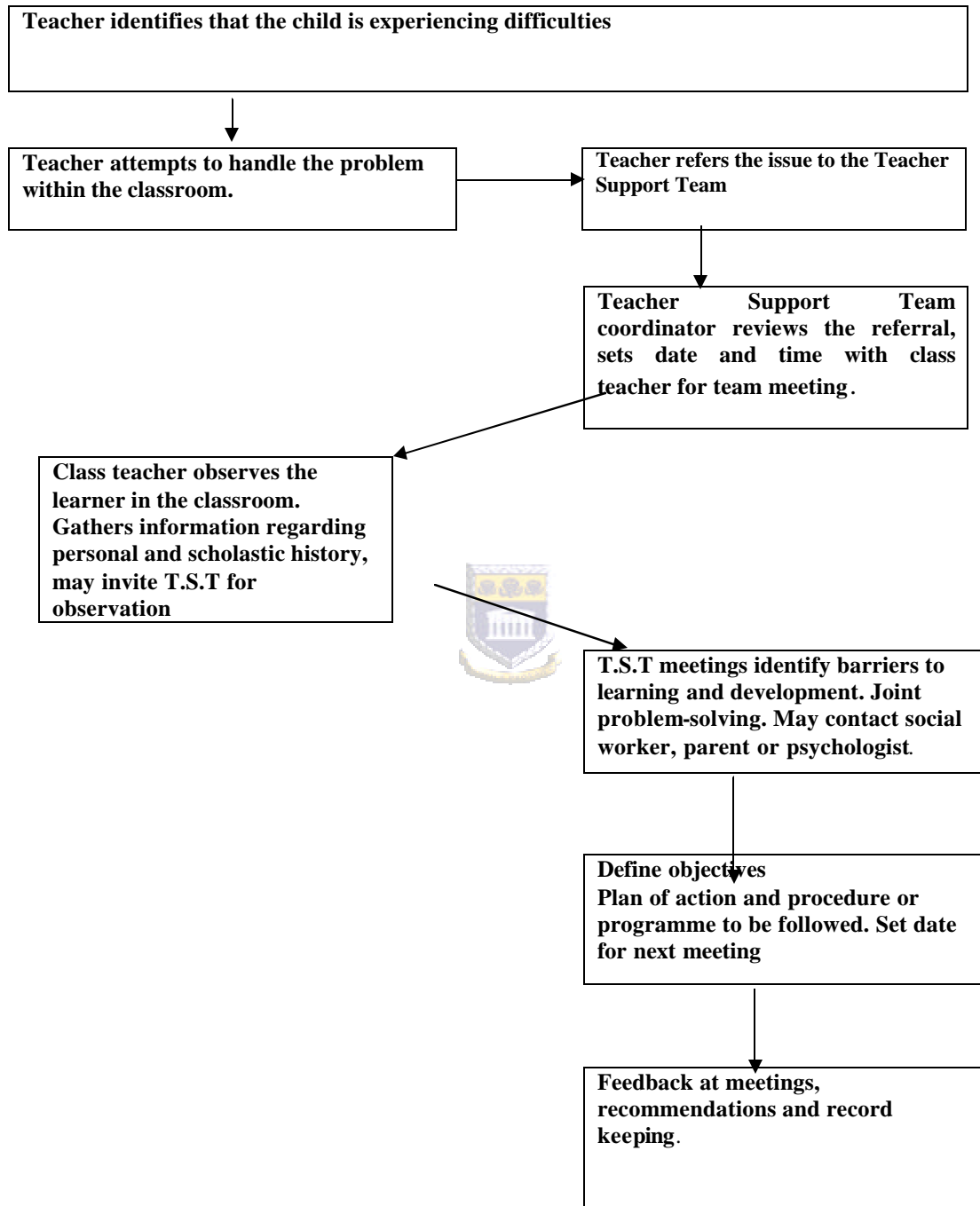
Based on the work of Chalfant, Pysh and Moultrie (1979), a Teacher Support Team is a school-based team of teachers which aims to:

- a) Act as a collaborative problem-solving team
- b) Perform a pre-referral function
- c) Provide immediate support and suggest intervention strategies for class teachers and
- d) Increase the capacity of teachers to solve and cope with classroom difficulties, particularly, but not exclusively, related to learners with special educational needs.
- e) Training teachers and community members.

According to Muthukrishna (2001:48), " a Teacher Support Team might be strengthened by the inclusion of expertise from local and district communities." That means it is crucial to pool limited available resources and make use of them. In providing inclusive responses to diversity, educators need to look beyond what is available in schools in order to support all learners effectively. The T.S.T works together with the classroom teacher to assist with the learner's behavioural and academic problems within the general education framework. The function of a T.S.T. is to address school and community needs such as educator development and support, parent education and school community building. The inclusion of experts from local and district communities might strengthen the team.



Lomofsky (2002) suggested the following procedure for referral to the T.S.T.



According to Creese, Daniels and Norwich (2000), Teacher Support Teams may be seen to constitute a practical embodiment of a school commitment to special educational needs by offering an indirect mechanism for supporting pupils through supporting teachers, in a setting in

which knowledge and understanding may be shared and developed with professional peers. In this context, Teacher Support Teams can be seen as being linked to all educational services where the primary client of the team is the teacher. The team helps the teacher to understand how to help the learner. The T.S.T s support the learning process by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and participation and accessing support from the community.

The principle behind these support teams is to promote collaboration, peer-support problem-solving and the use of a person with expertise rather than referring problem-solving to experts who will come from outside and supposedly tell teachers the truth about what they should do (Stager, 1990). When teachers from the same school who share the same vision and mission feel free to discuss problems which they encounter in the classroom, it means that help is available within the school and that learners with difficulties can be identified earlier and the appropriate assistance can be provided.

The following are the advantages of Teacher Support Teams as suggested by Stager and John (1990):



- a) Learners who require support will receive it in class.
- b) The total well being of learners remains the primary focus and priority within the school context.
- c) The implementation of the T.S.T will result in an improvement in the identification of LSEN.
- d) Improved teaching techniques promote whole school development.
- e) Parental involvement will promote the T.S.T. and will provide the opportunity for educators to discover and develop their strengths and in this way utilise the staff productively.

According to Stager and John (1990), the following are the key benefits arising from the establishment of Teacher Support Services:

- a) Regular education instructional programmes inside a school building accommodate the broad range of student abilities and interest.
- b) A structured support/assistance system is created for teachers.
- c) Inappropriate special education evaluation requests are reduced.

- d) Parents, teachers, administrators and students enjoy a sense of mutual involvement in solving problems concerning the critical needs of students.
- e) Teachers realise professional growth through suggestions from and interaction with the team.

- **Studies on Collaboration**

Bandy and Boyer (1997) conducted a research study in the rural areas. The research aimed to identify the impact of the rural experience on rural teachers and to establish: a) Their knowledge and understanding of learners with special educational needs (b) The perception of their own teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction and (c) The perception of the accessibility of support systems within the schools and district.

The positive points outlined by the teachers in this study were that collaboration helps them to deal with challenges in the classroom. Teachers mentioned that their school is small and the staff work together with learners with behaviour problems. The teachers all participate actively in group discussions during which strategies are proposed. Teachers were asked: What support is available to assist the classroom teachers when including learners with special educational needs? Over half of the teachers interviewed reported the availability of a teacher-assistance team on a daily basis. One comment was:

*“My colleagues have provided me with learning materials and resources to assist in planning for individual needs.”*

The research of Bandy and Boyer (1997) supports the notion that for the team to work successfully, there should be trust among partners and each should feel free to ask for help and share new ideas. Teachers should avoid working in isolation. Sharing knowledge with each other and the commitment of partners could bring a great change to the learner with special educational needs. The key to successful teaching and learning is a good relationship between teachers and other professionals. With the help of a T.S.T, the needs of teachers for programmes such as in-service training and skill development can be filled.

- **Studies on the T.S.T**

A research study by Daniels and Norwich (1994) comprised an evaluation of T. S.T. as a special educational needs support strategy in primary schools. Their research builds on the success of the setting up and the initial evaluation of Teacher Support Teams in primary school. The teachers were asked about the effects and usefulness of T.S.Ts. Twenty percent of teachers' notes were about increased teacher confidence and happiness, while in 33% of teachers' responses, some degree of child development was noted. Only one teacher expressed continuing concern. There were no negative reports. All pupils who had been referred showed improvement. The three class teachers who were helped by the T.S.T benefited professionally, and mentioned that their own expertise has been developed. The input from the T.S.T had been beneficial for both them and the school since everyone had to call for advice at some stage. The T.S.T members reported that they had learnt the importance of listening to colleagues. The referring teachers reported that they would be happy to request support again and they felt that strategies and approaches offered by the T.S.T were very workable. The majority of participants (70%) had used these strategies even with children who did not have special needs. Non-referring teachers reported that they did not consult the T.S.T because they felt that they already received adequate support from colleagues.



The findings of Daniels and Norwich (1994) confirm that the notion of Teacher Support Teams can work in the primary schools because some of the children have not attended pre-school and because they come from different backgrounds such as abusive families, a violent environment with a high crime rate and divorced families. A child from the above-mentioned circumstances tends to have behavioural problems and it is not easy for the teacher to handle the problems encountered in the classroom without the help of other professionals. For that matter, the T.S.T can play an important role in that it will discuss the problem with the teacher and suggest strategies and solutions to the teacher on how to handle the problem.

The T.S.T's purpose is to provide a pool of ideas and resources to teachers, which they can use in order to solve classroom problems. The primary client of the team is the teacher and the problem discussed in the T.S.T meeting is the teacher's concern about a particular learner or learners. The team attempts to assist the teacher to solve the learner's problems immediately. It

assists the teacher to master the skills and knowledge needed to deal with similar problems in the future. In addition, the T.S.T can be of benefit to the learner in that the child's problem is solved **in** the school rather than outside of the school environment. The people who know the child are able to tackle the problem immediately without delay. The teachers who share the ideas, skills, strategies and experiences in the T.S.T meetings are helping the learner. The team does not focus on the disability of the learner but rather on how to assist the teacher to attend to the diverse needs of the learner.

### **2.5.3 District Support Teams**

A District Support Team should be multi-disciplinary in its composition and includes the psychologist, social worker, school nurse, learning support teacher and other experts. As cited by White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001), the primary focus of District Support Teams is to provide the necessary support to schools and other learning sites. The team plays a vital role in building the capacity of the T.S.T and the school as a whole in order to face the challenges relating to individual differences. The District Support Team is useful in that it assists the teachers by holding in-service training for them on how to deal with the difficulties they encounter in the classroom. The District Support Team is also useful in that it allows other people in society - both the professionals and the community volunteers, to give their input with regards to the learners. It also supports the involvement of the parents of the learners with special educational needs. The collaboration of all agencies can ensure successful learning for LSEN because each expert brings new ideas and skills. The main aim of District Support Teams is to bring all the available resources in the community to the school. According to White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001), Special Schools and settings will be converted to resource centres and integrated into D.S.T so that they can provide specialised, professional support in developing the curriculum and in the assessment of learners and instruction to neighborhood schools. Upgrading resource centres and training staff would help in overcoming the barriers to learning and development. This can be achieved through the school's acceptance by the community and the teacher's attitudes to the change in education policy. The teacher's relationships with other professionals could result in positive outcomes for LSEN. This can only be achieved if the teachers accept that they cannot solve all the difficulties they encounter in the classroom on their own. The teachers should rather refer to their colleagues who constitute the Teachers Support Teams and who would then

analyze the problem or refer to the D.S.T if the problem is beyond their reach. According to the White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001), the aim of the D.S.T is to support all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met.

Bauer and Graden (1992) maintain that collaborative problem-solving provides the support network by means of which interventions, adaptations and accommodations are implemented in an inclusive classroom. The following are the basic problem-solving steps (in sequence) as defined by Bauer et al (1992): define and clarify the problem, analyze the problem, explore alternatives, implement strategies, provide support and evaluate the outcomes.

According to Muthukrishna (2000), the following are the roles of the D.S.T: Developing a holistic, community-based approach to support services, building the capacity of school-based support teams, facilitating the assessment of system needs and learners needs, assisting the school to access community support, facilitating intersectoral service co-ordination and collaboration, and building capacity and awareness of governing bodies around issues of barriers to learning and development.



## **2.6 Support Services in Mozambique and South Africa**

According to Chiluvane, Lehtomaki and Viniche (2001), community-based support programmes in Mozambique, co-ordinated by the Social Welfare authorities, has identified children with disabilities, provided families with home-based rehabilitation assistance and placed children with difficulties in the local schools. The Catholic Church also opened a centre for integration and supported the education of visually impaired children in regular schools. The international organization, UNICEF and Save the Children project, in collaboration with local community partners, has also paid attention to children with disabilities.

In order to increase social access to school activities, the directorate organized training seminars for teachers' educators and district level education officers and facilitated their work in the district. Seminars were done in each district to help people to support schools. In this way, the idea of effective collaboration among various community partners was brought closer to the school.

Two Inclusive Education pilot projects were conducted in South Africa in the five most disadvantaged provinces. The initiatives were undertaken by the national and provincial education departments in partnership with foreign funding organizations. The two projects, which were the DANIDA (Danish) and the SCOPE (South African Finnish Co-operation), will be reported on below. The aspects of the development of support services and T.S.T will be discussed.

As stated by Lazarus and Howell (2002), in South Africa, the Department of Education's, Danida Project, made provision for a National Quality Evaluation of the project. The NQE involves an external assessment and the entire project was designed to ensure ongoing internal monitoring and evaluation. One of the important studies is of the action research components of the pilot project in North West province. Here the teachers were asked about the kind of support they receive (both inside and outside of the school) to overcome barriers to learning and development. Eighty-four percent of the teachers said they did know what kind of support was available (either from within or outside of the school) while 10% of the teachers did not know about any support available at their school. This suggests that there are still some teachers who do not feel that they are sufficiently aware of what support is available to them. Teachers were asked if the Institutional-Level Support Team (ILST), which has been referred to as T.S.T in this study, had been established. The majority of teachers replied that it has been established. However nine teachers indicated that they did not know about T.S.T in their schools. This suggests that some teachers may be unaware of the establishment of the ILST.

The following figures reflect teachers' attitudes to the ILST: Thirty-six teachers indicated that they feel that the ILST is helping teachers to overcome the barriers to learning while five indicated that they did not feel the IST is helping them. Three teachers were unsure. According to the NQE report, the members of the ILST indicated a number of ways in which they felt that the ILST was helping the teachers in their classroom. The ILST enables the teachers to discuss the barriers faced by the learners in the classroom. The ILST:

- Gives teachers different ideas about how to handle particular problems experienced in their classrooms.
- Assists teachers with teaching materials and equipment and how to structure lessons to “make inclusion work”.
- Provides a link between the teachers and other personnel with specialized skills such as social workers and psychologists.
- Links teachers with other support systems in the community.
- Liaises with parents to help address the barriers to learning.

One aspect of the study addresses the need for support at various levels of the education system in the provinces. The first strategy accessed support by establishing school-based support, referred to as (IBST) - Institution-Based Support Teams. These teams comprise senior educators in the school and, where possible, suitable parents and other community members. Their primary function was to support learning by identifying and addressing the barriers and secondly, by mobilizing and accessing support from the community (Da Costa, 2003). Within the SCOPE project, most schools managed to set up IBSTs, but they were functioning at different levels of efficiency. The intention was that teachers would have developed skills and competencies to sustain the support team.

This is consistent with international research (Creese, Daniels and Norwich, 2000) and (Honko, 1990) and research conducted nationally (Muthukrishna 2001, Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001). At the time of the SCOPE project, the District Support Resource was still operating on the medical model by attending to individual learners. The project was in the process of transforming this model. Certain special schools served as resources centres that were able to offer support to ISBTS in schools at a district level. The therapist also provided workshops for schools to build skills, attitudes and knowledge, necessary to support learners in the mainstream classroom. Many lessons about good practices and their implementation can be learned from these projects.



## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter gives a review of the relevant literature concerning the issue of support needed by: teachers of LSEN, Education Support Services in the South African context and educators in the south-Sahara country of Mozambique. By studying the EWP and various research studies, it emerges that there is a need for:

- a) Teachers to work collaboratively and to solve problems in a collaborative manner and thereby develop the skills needed to support LSEN.
- b) The development of support services. This thesis will focus on the development of SBTST and how they can interact with District and community support.

In the literature review, the three-tier system is explained, including not only the T.S.T at the school level, but also the D.S.T and community support. This is a policy recommendation that is currently being implemented in the Western Cape. Although this research is about T.S.T, it is important to approach it from the systemic perspective whereby the T.S.T functions with the support of the district and the community. The following chapter discusses the methodology used in gathering data.

## Chapter Three

### Research Design and Methodology

#### 3. Introduction

This chapter includes a description of the research problem, the research design and the research methods used to conduct the study.

#### 3.1 Research problem

This research attempts to investigate the process of building the capacity of the teachers and establishing a T.S.T in order to support LSEN in a particular school. As explained in Chapter One, the teachers in the mainstream schools are expected to address the diverse needs of all learners in the mainstream classroom, and they often lack the skills and knowledge required to deal with the diverse needs of learners. As stated by Creese, Daniels and Norwich (1997), providing effectively for the range of pupils with special educational needs in particular, requires teachers' collaboration.



#### 3.2 The main aim of this study is:

To investigate the perceptions and coping skills of teachers of LSEN in identifying and addressing the barriers to learning and development and to explore the support available for teachers with particular reference to developing a T.S.T.

#### 3.2.1 Secondary aims and purpose of the research is to investigate:

- a) The teachers' perceptions of the special needs of learners and the nature of those needs in an Inclusive Education setting.
- b) The development of knowledge and skills of teaching staff for identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development.
- c) The process of establishing and developing the T.S.T.

### **3.3 Scope of the study**

Firstly, a description of the school and the context will be given. This research was conducted at a primary school in Site C, Khayelitsha Township. The school is large, with 31 teaching staff and an enrolment of 1215 pupils. The entire teaching staff participated in the research study, which included the principal and the members of the T.S.T. At the first meeting, the aims and purpose of the research was explained to the staff by the researcher and the university lecturers. The collaboration and co-operation from the school staff was ascertained. At the second meeting, the teachers were asked to do a whole school needs analysis, and then prioritise their needs.

### **3.4 Research Design**

This is a case study conducted at a primary school in Khayelitsha. The entire teaching staff were required to participate. The case study was used in this research because the method allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific situation and thereby identify the interactive process at work. Bell (1988) described a case study as an umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decision to focus on inquiry around instance. It allows the researcher to use a variety of sources, a variety of types of data and various research methods as part of the investigation. Information gathered through observation, questionnaires, interviews and documents can be seen as complementary to each other, and can be combined to produce differing but mutually supportive ways of collecting data.

Qualitative research was used in this study because it is naturalistic in that data is gathered in the situation where events occur naturally rather than in controlled conditions. The respondents perspective generates the relevant data. Qualitative research allows interaction between the researcher and the respondents. According to Burgess (1984), in qualitative research methods, the researcher works in natural settings to observe how an individual attributes meaning to social situations. Much of the investigation is devoted to obtaining some kind of understanding of the social, cultural and historical setting.

Qualitative research was chosen as the most appropriate method to investigate teachers' opinions on LSEN and attitudes towards learners with learning difficulties and special needs in the mainstream classroom and is concerned with meaning and the way people understand things. The method has a flexible approach in that it gives the researcher an opportunity to gain in-depth data on teachers' concerns about LSEN. It also allows the support needed by teachers, to be explored.

Denscombe (1998) stated that the data and analysis of qualitative research is grounded in reality. Qualitative research allows for the possibility that alternative explanations may exist and in this respect it draws on the interpretive skills of the researcher, and is primarily concerned with how people behave and why they behave in a certain way. Therefore, it is appropriate for the researcher to be able to investigate teachers' perceptions of LSEN and how teachers cope with LSEN. Interaction is important in this research study. Qualitative research recognises the researcher's own identity, as his background and beliefs have a role to play in the creation and analysis of the data. The researcher in turn, would determine the background and beliefs of teachers concerning LSEN. Opinions, beliefs and views are easily investigated by using qualitative research methods.

### **3.5. The Subjects**

The subjects in this study comprise 31 members of the teaching staff, 14 of whom had been nominated to serve on the Teacher Support Team. The idea was to build the capacity of all the class teachers, and facilitate the process of establishing the T.S.T. Although the research included all 31 members of staff, different methods of data collection were applied to different sectors. At the pre- intervention stage all 31 staff members completed the baseline questionnaire at the start of the research (pre-workshop). At the post- intervention stage of the study, a different questionnaire to evaluate the workshops was given to all teachers and only the 14 T.S.T teachers attended a focus group interview. The researcher observed and made notes at three T.S.T meetings and classroom observation took place in three foundation phase classrooms. See table 3.1 for a more detailed explanation.

### 3.5.1 Data gathering methods and procedure

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) define triangulation as a way of guarding against researcher bias and checking out accounts from different informants. In order to provide triangulation, data was obtained from more than one source. By drawing on other types and sources of data, observers also gain a deeper and clearer understanding of the setting and the subjects under study. Denscombe (1998) states that the possibility of employing more than one method stems from the fact that different methods each produce their own set of assumptions about the nature of the social world and the kind of data that can be utilised to increase one's knowledge of the world.

Using different methods produces different kinds of data on the same topic. The triangulation of data was used to procure information about the support needed by teachers of LSEN in the mainstream classroom. Neuman (2001) describes triangulation as a process used by qualitative and quantitative social researchers. Social researchers believe it is better to look at something from several angles than to look at it in only one way. In order to understand teachers' perceptions of LSEN and the support needed by certain teachers within the education context, the following methods of data collection were used: questionnaires, a focus group interview and observation and field notes.

At the initial meeting of the entire staff, the needs of the teachers and the school were prioritized. The researchers held workshops for the teachers based on the priorities that emerged from the needs analysis. Times and dates were scheduled for the workshops, and for the researcher to attend the classroom observation and T.S.T meetings. Data gathering took place during over a period of four months, from July 2002 to October 2002.

Two questionnaires were administered. Pre-intervention a baseline assessment or initial survey questionnaire for each staff member and post- intervention questionnaire to evaluate the workshops. During - intervention the workshops were conducted by the university lecturers. The researcher kept a journal of observation. The researcher also observed and made detailed notes of the teachers at work in the classroom and at T.S.T meetings.

Five workshops were arranged for the entire teaching staff based on the needs analysis of the school. The last two workshops took place after the evaluation had been completed and were not included in the post-workshop questionnaire.


Impacts of the intervention were studied through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. As table 3.1 demonstrates, data was collected at three stages during the project as follows:

- By administering the baseline questionnaire before the workshops and prior to intervention,
- By means of midcourse observation notes taken during the workshops in the classroom and at T.S.T meetings.
- After four months at the final stages of the evaluation of the workshops and by conducting the T.S.T focus group interview.

This is explained in the table below.



**Table 3.1****Data collection methods**

	<b>School</b>	<b>T.S.T (Team)</b>
<b>Baseline</b> <b>Questionnaire</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-intervention</li> </ul>	(N=31) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of teachers about LSEN</li> <li>• The nature of the teachers needs</li> <li>• Barriers to learning</li> </ul>	(N=14) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of teachers about LSEN</li> <li>• The nature of the needs of the T.S.T</li> <li>• Barriers to learning</li> </ul>
<b>Midcourse</b> (during the intervention) Observation and field notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process at workshops</li> <li>• In the classroom - Grades 2-4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process at the workshop</li> <li>• At the three T.S.T meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>End post intervention</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire</li> <li>• Focus group interview</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of workshop</li> <li>• Perceived impact on T.S.T.</li> </ul>

**3.5.2 The data collection measures (appendix A)**

- **Baseline questionnaire (Pre-intervention period)**

A baseline questionnaire was given to all the teaching staff at the start of the intervention and before the workshops. The questionnaire was distributed, completed and collected prior to the start of the programme. The teachers were advised on how to answer the questions. According to Denscombe (1998), questionnaires are economical, in that they can provide a considerable amount of research data at a relatively low cost in terms of materials, time and money.

Questionnaires supply standardized answers, to the extent that all respondents are exposed to exactly the same questions with no scope for variation via face-to-face contact with the researcher.

The questionnaire contained mainly open-ended questions that allowed individuals to express their opinions. As stated by Cohen and Manion (1998), open-ended questionnaires capture the authenticity, richness, depth-of-response, honesty and candour of the interviewees. The purpose of the questionnaire was to understand how the participants perceive LSEN and how they cope with learning and behavioural difficulties encountered in the school. The questionnaires tapped the participants' personal understanding of and feelings about LSEN.

The questions were focused on the teachers' perceptions of the factors that contribute towards learning breakdown, the teachers' attitudes towards LSEN, the functioning of the T.S.T., the coping skills of the teachers of LSEN, and parental involvement. These questions were designed to elicit their perceptions about barriers to learning and development. It also included questions about the kind of learning and behavioural issues that the teachers encounter.



The bio-demographical questionnaire, which was included as a separate section in the questionnaire, was used to ascertain background information about each teacher, focusing on age, gender, marital status, teaching experience, qualifications, years of training, learning area, language and place of origin. (See Appendix A). This provided a profile on the teacher's origin qualification and teaching experience.

### **3.5.3 Mid-course data collection methods (Intervention period)**

This refers to the method of collecting data during the research. Non-participant observation was used in recording the observations at the in-service training workshops, of classroom practice and at T.S.T meetings.



- **Observation journals and schedule**

Cohen and Manion (1989) state that observational data is attractive as it affords the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from a live situation. They further stated that in an observation study the researcher is able to notice on-going behaviour as it occurs and is able to make appropriate notes about its main features.

Denscombe (1998), states that observation offers the social researcher a distinct way of collecting data. It does not rely on what people say they do, or what they say they think. It draws on the direct evidence of the eyewitness of events first-hand. It is based on the premise that for a certain purpose, it is best to observe what actually happens.

The following are the advantages of non-participant observation as stated by Denscombe (1998):

- Non-participant observation uses the researcher's self as the main instrument of the research – it therefore requires little by way of technical and statistical support.
- The method is more likely to retain the naturalness of the setting as compared to other social research methods.
- As a method of social research, non-participant observation is useful for understanding the views and perceptions of the subjects.

Disadvantage of non-participant observation:

- It can be potentially hazardous for the researcher - physically, legally, socially and may be psychologically risky.

Non-participant observation is a method used to notice details that might otherwise be missed and to discover topics that participants might not freely talk about in an interview situation. Non-participant observation was therefore used during the T.S.T meetings and workshops. During the class in progress, the researcher was able to observe the children with behavioural and scholastic difficulties, as well as the teacher. The observer took notice of a particular learner in each class whose case study had been referred to the T.S.T meetings. The behaviour of that

learner, as well as the teacher's interaction with the learners, was noted using the observation schedule, to record the duration and frequency of events.

### **3.5.4 Post –intervention Data Period**

At the end of the research, questionnaires were administered to all the teaching staff members to evaluate the workshops. The researcher informed the participants of the importance of completing the questionnaires in order to evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of the workshops (see Appendix B).

In addition, a focus group interview was held only with the members of the T.S.T.(see AppendixC)

- **Post workshop questionnaires to evaluate effectiveness of the workshops**

Questionnaires were administered to all the staff (n=31) after three workshops. The purpose of the questionnaires was to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops. Some questions were closed and needed specific answers and others were open-ended. The teachers were asked to rate each workshop according to its usefulness, on the rating scales that were provided. There was also space for general comments at the end, which was useful in determining any changes in teachers' attitudes and knowledge of LSEN. Cohen and Manion (1980) stated that rating scales combine the opportunity for a flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies, correlation and other forms of qualitative analysis.

- **Focus groups interviews (Appendix C)**

The focus group interview was limited to the teachers (n=14) who were also members of the T.S.T. According to Cohen and Manion (1994), during focus group interviews, participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer - the views of the participants can thus become known. According to Denscombe (1998) a focus group is regarded as a useful way of exploring attitudes towards a non-sensitive, non-controversial topic. By using this method it was possible to gain different ideas from different people. Group interviews, as opposed to

individual interviews, can provide another level of data gathering and a perspective on the research problem (Fontana and Frey, 1951).

The participants in focus groups say the most interesting aspect of their discussion is the chance to share and compare their ideas and experiences. Focus group interviews are a more formal method to obtain data. The interview had the benefit of encouraging teachers to expand and explain their perceptions and ideas. Furthermore, the focus group was considered to have the potential for gathering background information relating to the immediate context of the classroom and to children with special educational needs. The focus group interview helps to reveal consensus views and may generate richer responses because it allows the participants to challenge one another's opinions. Denscombe (1998) mentions the advantages and the disadvantages of a focus group interview. The disadvantages are that:

- It neglects certain views, especially those of 'quieter' people. Certain members of the group might dominate the talk, while others might struggle to be heard.
- The opinions that are expressed are ones that are perceived to be "acceptable" within the group.
- It is difficult to record the discussion, as speakers interrupt one another and talk simultaneously.
- There is a possibility that people will be reluctant to disclose thoughts on sensitive, personal or emotional matters in the company of others.

An advantage is that:

- A focus group interview can lead to insights that do not otherwise come to light through the one-to-one conventional interview.

The focus group interview was conducted after the intervention and aimed to explore the attitudes, feelings, perceptions and ideas concerning LSEN, the Inclusive Education policy and the inclusion of LSEN in the mainstream classroom. It also explored the subjects' views on the support for teachers of LSEN.

### 3.6 Procedure for the in-service training workshops

The workshops were arranged according to the needs analysis done at the school. The teachers prioritized their needs as follows: (see Appendix B).

- How to fill in the T.S.T referral form and how to identify the strengths and weakness of LSEN.
- How to help the slow learners in the classroom and learners with behavioural difficulties.
- The teaching of literacy in all classes.

#### 3.6.1 Description of workshop intervention

- Twenty-eight teachers out of 31 attended Workshop One. The aim was to assist the teachers to fill in a T.S.T referral form and how to define the problem. It also aimed to help the teachers in referring learners to the T.S.T and how to identify the problem by determining the strengths and weaknesses of the learners. To encourage motivation, the workshop started with a cartoon from which the teachers were asked to identify the problem and to provide a solution. Teachers were then placed in groups according to learning areas. Using the referral form, they were given a fictitious case study in which they had to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the child. The University of the Western Cape (UWC) lecturers devised a new form for this purpose. The teachers mentioned that previously it had been difficult for them to identify the barrier and to fill in the referral form that was provided by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). They found the previous form too complicated and preferred the format that was provided at the workshop by UWC (Appendix E).

Following on this was an explanation and demonstration on how to conduct behavioural observation in the classroom. The teachers were required to decide on the area of weakness or the behaviour of the learner that caused the most concern or disturbance. They were asked to design a behaviour chart for the child whose behaviour was most troublesome. They observed one child and noted the frequency of the occurrence of the problematic behaviour. This process helped them to identify and rate the frequency of the difficulties

experienced by the learner. The teachers were asked to bring the case studies under observation to the next workshop.

- Workshop Two dealt with the cases presented as a consequence of the behavioural observation by teachers in their classroom. Only 19 teachers attended the workshop as some teachers went to another meeting. The aim of the workshop was to assist the teachers to identify the aspect of the learner's behaviour that concerns them the most. For the report back and the discussion teachers were grouped according to their phases. At the meeting, four teachers reported on the observation and behavior chart of a learner that they had completed during the week. They then discussed the solutions together with the other teachers.
- Workshop Three was an overview on teaching literacy. Twenty-six teachers attended this workshop. The aim was to assist teachers in dealing with learners who have difficulty in learning how to read for meaning. Teachers were grouped according to their grades or phases. This workshop covered the different approaches to teaching reading: namely phonics, sight words, language experience and whole language. The lecturer emphasised the importance of developing strategies as well as reading for meaning as a whole language approach. Teachers were advised to let pupils create their own books. They were also advised to make learning interesting by means of a demonstration involving language games and word games. The workshop concluded with group discussions and a report back on the resources available to the school, both internally and externally. Teachers were introduced to paired reading and shared reading approaches. During the discussion at the conclusion of the workshop, some Foundation Phase teachers mentioned that they use story telling to teach learners who cannot read. This method is compatible with OBE and whole language approaches to teaching.
- Workshop Four. After the third workshop teachers requested that Workshop Four deal with the topic of cognitive strategies. Twenty-six teachers attended the workshop. The aim of the fourth workshop was to assist teachers in how to transmit to learners ways in which to identify and solve problems and to make decisions based on critical and

creative thinking. This was aimed at understanding the critical outcomes. To demonstrate the strategies, the teachers were given problems to solve. They were asked to discuss their own strategies for solving the problem. One teacher mentioned that he read the whole problem before going into detail, another mentioned that she talked to herself while problem-solving. This exercise aimed to develop their metacognitive awareness when solving problems and to show them how to apply this in their teaching.

- Workshop Five was on classroom management, and was attended by 28 teachers. The aim of the workshop was to assist teachers in how to handle large classes with learners who experience behavioural problems. The same case studies that teachers presented at Workshop Two were used for demonstration. Teachers were asked to mention the support given by the school for learners with behavioural difficulties. They mentioned the following support structures that exist in their school: SMT, SGB and T.S.T. Teachers were guided in how to handle their classes.



### 3.7 Observation Schedule

The researcher observed and made notes while the lecturer conducted the workshops. These were held in English because the researcher and her supervisor cannot speak Xhosa. The majority of the teaching staff was very interested in the project and they participated fully. The duration of the workshops was two hours, from 13.00 - 15.00 on Wednesday afternoons and discussions followed the presentations. The commencement of the workshops had to be postponed due to staff having to attend other meetings. Thus only three workshops out of five were evaluated by the questionnaires.

The researcher observed the Grade Two, Grade Three and Grade Four classes on consecutive Wednesday mornings for an hour (for four sessions). The researcher also observed the T.S.T meetings that were conducted once a week on Mondays for two hours. Usually, the team discussed the difficulties encountered by teachers in the classrooms with learners who experience scholastic difficulties and behavioural and social problems. The team collaboratively shared ideas on how to help teachers of LSEN and how to offer support.

### 3.8 Ethical considerations

The school principal and the researchers arranged a meeting with the entire staff. The aim and purpose of the research, clearly stated by the researcher, was to investigate the perceptions and coping skills of teachers. The individuals from whom data was gathered were informed that the name of the school and the individuals would remain confidential, and that they could not be identified.

### 3.9 Data analysis methods

In qualitative research, the researcher analyses data by organising it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts, or similar features. He or she develops new concepts, formulates conceptual definitions, and examines the relationships among concepts. Eventually, the concepts are linked to each other in terms of sequence (Neuman 2001:163).



The data gathered from questionnaires, focus group discussions, T.S.T. meetings and classrooms observations, was analysed qualitatively. When analyzing data from the Baseline individual questionnaires, the responses were grouped according to the phases. Group One is the Foundation (Phase N=10, Grades One to Three) and Group Two is the Intermediate and Senior Phase (N=18, Grades Four to Seven). Data gathered from the post- intervention questionnaires and the focus group interviews were taken from the group as a whole (Grades One to Seven).

The descriptive data from the responses to the questionnaires and interviews was organized or categorised according to themes or recurring patterns. These are the ideas that appeared to be more similar, more frequent and related to each other. The researcher searches for recurring patterns in the data and then writes down the words or phrases to represent these themes or patterns. These words and phrases become the coding categories. This is a method used to sort the descriptive data, which then becomes 'coded'. The teachers' responses were analysed according to the criteria, which were 'coded' and then converted to percentages.

### 3.10 Conclusions

In the next two chapters, the results and findings from the questionnaires, observation notes, focus group interviews and evaluation of the workshops, are presented. This is followed by a discussion.





## Chapter Four

### Research results and findings

#### 4. Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the research findings. The discussion is based on the responses given using the following measures and procedures:

- Section A: Pre-intervention Baseline questionnaires including bio-demographical details that were completed by all the teaching staff (31 members).
- Section B: Mid-course during the intervention observation field notes from T.S.T meetings and classroom lessons.

Post - intervention questionnaires completed by the teaching staff, aimed at evaluating the process. Focus group interviews were held only with the T.S.T. members.

The information that was gathered from the baseline questionnaires has been separated and analysed according to two phases:

- a) Foundation Phase teachers (Grades One – Three ) N=10
- b) Intermediate and Senior Phase teachers (Grades Four – Seven) N=18

#### 4.1 SECTION A: Responses from baseline questionnaires.

##### Data from bio-demographical questionnaires.

This information was useful in understanding the background to and the composition of the staff.

**Table 4.1 Bio-demographical details based on the age distribution of teaching staff**

Age	No of teachers
25-30	13
31-34	2
35-40	9
41-44	1
45-50	4
Unknown	2
Total	31

Most of the teachers are still young – their age ranges between 25-30 years. Out of 31 teachers, two of the ages are unknown.

**Table 4.2 Bio-demographical details based on the qualifications of teaching staff**

<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>No of teachers</b>	<b>No of years trained</b>
Higher diploma in education	4	4 years
Senior primary teaching diploma	6	3 years
Junior primary teaching diploma	8	3 years
Bachelor of Education	2	4 years
Higher primary teaching certificate	1	2 years
Bachelor of Arts	1	4 years
Primary teacher's diploma	1	3 years
M + 2	2	2 years
Unknown	6	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	

All the teachers are qualified but the educational details of six of the teachers are unknown.

**Table 4.3 Bio-demographical details based on years of experience.**

<b>Years of teaching experience</b>	<b>No of teachers</b>
1-5	9
6-10	10
11-14	2
15-20	4
21-24	2
25-30	2
Unknown	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>

The numbers of years of teaching experience of two of the teachers are unknown. Most teachers have between five to ten years experience. Nineteen teachers have less than 10 years of teaching experience and ten have over ten years of teaching experience.

**Table 4.4 Bio-demographical details of marital status and place of origin**

Marital status	Number of teachers	Place of origin	Number of teachers
Single	17	Eastern Cape	18
Married	6	Western Cape	8
Widowed	0	Unknown	5
Divorced	1	TOTAL	31
Unknown	7		
TOTAL	31		

The majority of the teachers are from the Eastern Cape. The remainder come from the Western Cape while the origins of five of the teachers are unknown. This school had 31 teachers, 14 of whom were appointed members of the T.S.T.

#### **4.2 Teachers' attitudes towards learners who experience barriers to learning and who have special educational needs**

The data from the pre-intervention baseline questionnaire (Appendix A), the end post-intervention questionnaire and focus group interviews, has been analyzed and grouped according to themes, corresponding to the teachers' perceptions of barriers to learning and other issues that arose. These responses were analyzed according to themes that were "coded". The conversion of the numbers to percentages is done to reflect the proportional number of responses since having the number only may be misleading.

##### **4.2.1 Responses from baseline questionnaire (Appendix A)**

- Intermediate and Senior Phase teachers (N=18)

In the responses from the baseline questionnaires more than half the teachers (55%) from the Intermediate Phase mentioned that they do not have problems in accommodating learners with learning difficulties. Comments were:

*"I feel challenged because each learner has a right to be educated on the school premises."*

*“It is my job to see to it that I help them.”*

The remainder (44%) of the Intermediate Phase expressed feelings of inadequacy in knowing how to manage these learners. Most comments were to the effect that there was too little time to give “individual attention” to each learner. One teacher expressed feeling:

*“Frustrated, but I try my best to help the child.”*

- Foundation Phase (N=10)

In the Foundation Phase 40% gave positive responses and felt that they can cope. The comments were:

*“ I can handle children with learning difficulties.”*

*“I gave them work according to their abilities.”*

The majority of the Foundation Phase (60%) responded negatively and expressed feelings of helplessness.



*“I feel guilty because I cannot help the child”*

*“The classes are overcrowded and it is not easy to attend to every learner’s needs”.*

Teachers mentioned that exclusion and negative attitudes towards learners with SEN limit the opportunities for learners to interact socially and to advance academically. The negative responses given by the Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers reflected feelings of discomfort with having LSEN in their classrooms. The perception was that LSEN require special attention from the teacher in the classroom. Teachers mentioned that there is no time for special attention because classes are overcrowded. They believed that they need more time, skills and special knowledge in order to handle learners with SEN and because of a high pupil/teacher ratio, it is not possible to attend to every learner. Therefore the difficulty arises because they do not have the skills or the confidence to teach learners with diverse needs. One teacher was concerned about his lack of knowledge on how to prepare suitable materials for

such learners. Others feared that accommodating LSEN would be problematic because the attention would be given to one child and the rest of the class could be neglected.

#### **4.2.2 Recommendations made in teachers' questionnaires**

In general, teachers emphasised the need to be trained to teach LSEN and at the same time build their confidence in teaching such learners. They also need a person skilled in developing resources to assist them to design materials for LSEN. Due to the high teacher/pupil ratio, they would not have sufficient time to devote to LSEN and would need help from a remedial or learning support facilitator.

#### **4.2.3 Extrinsic Factors that could be causing learning breakdown**

Barriers to learning and development, which were mentioned by all the teaching staff in the needs analysis, were behavioural problems, social problems, scholastic problems and barriers in the education system itself.

The rate of school drop-out and grade repetition is high and the teachers considered the following to be contributing factors:



- Absenteeism
- LSEN
- Parental ignorance
- Poverty
- Gangsters

All the teachers who responded agreed that there is a high rate of grade repetition and drop-out from school due to some of the factors mentioned above. Pupils have a tendency to not attend school regularly, and due to frequent absenteeism they miss new work and have to repeat a class.

*“Some pupils repeat the class because they have special needs and we do not have the knowledge and skills to attend to the diverse needs of learners”.*

(Response from a Foundation Phase teacher)

One teacher mentioned that poverty is a major problem amongst the Khayelitsha children who are often forced to drop out of school to seek employment. The teachers maintained that children drop out of school to join the gangsters in the townships, as there are no youth clubs at which children can spend their recreation time after school.

#### 4.2.4 Behavioural problems

The teachers mentioned the following issues that influence behavioural problems: conforming to peer pressure, lack of discipline, non-attendance and unpunctuality and overage learners.

- **Peer pressure**

Most teachers from the Intermediate Phase mentioned that pupils' behaviour is influenced mostly by their relationships with the people or friends with whom they interact at home. They maintained that problems stem from the home because learners only spent six hours at school in a 24-hour day. Both the Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers agreed that the environment in Khayelitsha is not conducive to learning. There is a high rate of crime and drug smuggling, which predisposes them to this adverse behaviour.

*“There are no good examples for children at home”.*

(Response from an Intermediate Phase teacher)

*“Some children are living in a one-roomed house and that room is used for multi-purposes like selling beer and sleeping. For that reason the child is likely to behave the same way as the customers coming to his or her home for beer.”*

(Response from a Foundation Phase teacher).

- **Discipline**

Teachers maintained that some children are not properly disciplined because the grandparents are rearing them while their real parents are working far from home. Another teacher related an

incident about a single mother who sometimes leaves the children alone for a long time while she seeks work. Teachers mentioned that children are left alone and circumstances force them to leave school. This can result in them becoming street kids.

All the teachers believe that those learners who live under stressful home conditions do not behave well and eventually leave school to become street kids.

- **Non-attendance**

The other behaviour problems can be attributed to the fact that some pupils have a tendency to not regularly attend school - they only attend when they feel like it. The reason given is that some parents do not motivate their children to attend and they do not tell children about the benefits of schooling. A Foundation Phase teacher said that if parents do not motivate children to attend, this attitude could be considered parental neglect. They also stated that most girls miss classes because they look after their siblings while their mothers go out to seek jobs. The ignorance of parents also creates a problem because they do not motivate their children to go to school.



- **Unpunctuality**

Teachers complained that learners do not come in time for school. This is because some of them take care of their siblings while their parents go to work in the morning or they come to school late because they have the responsibility of completing home chores allocated to them by the parents or the caregivers. In addition, the teachers also come to school late because most of them do not live in Khayelitsha and have to rely on public transport. One teacher said: “Learning cannot be effective because both children and teachers come to school late.”

#### **4.2.5 Social problems**

In the response to the questionnaire the issues that were mentioned as barriers in the social context were poverty, family problems, child abuse, parental ignorance, drug abuse, illness, mobility and absenteeism.

- **Poverty and unemployment.**

All the teachers from the two phases referred to poverty as one of the major problems that affects the learners. They stated that some learners come to school without having a good breakfast because of the poor situation at home. A teacher from the Foundation Phase emphasised that lack of food at home forces some pupils to drop-out of school in search of food on the street. Teachers mentioned that pupils who are hungry cannot work well in class and most of them are underachievers.

Moreover, teachers from the Foundation Phase mentioned more than one incident of food theft from other pupils' bags by the children who had not eaten anything in the morning. Teachers said that most of the parents are unemployed and not earning. Those who are working have to support a large number of people with one salary. Many people living in Khayelitsha earn their living informally from the sale of sweets, chips or beer. Pupils who live in Site C, Khayelitsha, are subjected to poor living conditions in the shacks. Consequently, pupils cannot study well at night and are unable to do homework.



- **Family problems**

Teachers maintained that the problems children faced at home were beyond their control, for example many pupils live with a divorced parent (usually the mother) and the stress of being a single mother may lead to child neglect. In some divorce cases, the other partner tries to win the love of the child by telling the child that the father or the mother does not care about them or the one parent blames the other. To illustrate this with a quote from another teacher:

*“It is frustrating to live in that kind of situation, especially if a particular child used to live with both parents before.”*

- **Child Abuse**

According to 70% of the teachers from the Foundation Phase, the high poverty rate in Khayelitsha forces some guardians or parents to send their children to beg on the street for food or money so that there is something to bring home in the evening. Teachers mentioned that some children are living with relatives or uncles who tend to sexually abuse their female nieces.



- **Parental lack of involvement**

According to teachers from the three phases, the parents who are ignorant about their children's learning do not come to school when they are asked to do so.

*“Especially the parents whose child needs special attention do not come because they already know that the child has problems and they feel ashamed.”*

(Response from a Foundation Phase teacher)

Lack of parental involvement is a barrier to learning. Teachers mentioned that most parents are illiterate. Hence it is difficult for them to help their children with schoolwork. Some parents are afraid to come to school to talk to the teachers about their children's performance.

*“When parents are called to come to school they do not come because they are afraid their children would be chased away because of the child's learning difficulties”.* (Response from a Senior Phase teacher)



The main reason that parents come to school is when their child has been mistreated by another child or by the teacher. They do not come to find out about the child's performance. All the teachers said that parents do not help the pupils with homework.

- **Drug Abuse**

The Intermediate Phase teachers referred to the problem of drug abuse that affects some of the children. According to the teachers, when children are sent by parents or relatives to beg on the street, they mix with the wrong people and end up using drugs. These learners bring this problem to school and introduce the behaviour to other children. Some children use drugs during break time and when they return to their classrooms they fall asleep or disturb the other children. The teachers maintained that children imitate their older brothers or friends at home because there is a high rate of drug abuse in Khayelitsha. Some parents are drug dealers and some of their children bring drugs from the home to school.

- **Illness**

The teachers reported that some pupils live with relatives or grandparents because their parents have died from HIV/AIDS. They mentioned that some children are traumatised when they witness their parent's death. The death of the parent places stress on the children who have to become babysitters or care for their sick parents. Consequently these children fail or drop-out of school. The parent's illness affects the children's concentration in the class as they are tormented with the thought of the dying parent at home.

*“Parental death results in children manifesting stress and depression and they do not participate in class. This results in school drop-out or failure”.* (Response from an Intermediate Phase teacher)

- **Mobility**

Intermediate Phase teachers maintained that the other barrier to effective teaching and learning is the fact that pupils are frequently being moved from one area to another. The majority of teachers said the Khayelitsha community is not stable because people move from place to place. This mobility is problematic in that if a teacher identifies a particular child as LSEN and attends to that child, the next day he or she may no longer attend that school. Some children who enter Grades Four or Five are not able to cope with the level of work because of the problem of mobility and because they do not have a good foundation.

*“It is frustrating for the child to adapt to a new environment. Most children who come to our school to do Grades Four or Five struggle and they cannot even write their names. It is also very frustrating for the child”.* (Response from an Intermediate Phase teacher)

#### 4.2.6 Scholastic problems

The teachers reported that many learners have difficulty in learning to read and write. The systemic barriers to scholastic progress, such as lack of facilities, large classes and a lack of resources, exacerbate this problem.

- **Large classes (pupil-teacher ratio)**

All the teachers from the three Phases (100%) maintained that the large number of pupils in the class contribute to the ineffectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Due to a high number of pupils in the class, it is difficult for them to attend to the needs of every learner, especially those with SEN. They also mentioned that it is difficult for them to deal with the child with behavioural problems.

*“To mark books for a huge class is stressful.”*



The teachers from the foundation phase stated,

*“It is difficult for them to notice if one child has been left behind because they do not tell you if they do not follow the teacher.”* (Response from a Foundation Phase teacher)

This results in grade repetition and drop-out. It is difficult for teachers to interact with their learners as it takes time for them to know their names and background.

- **Lack of facilities and resources**

Teachers from both Phases reported that there is a lack of teaching materials for LSEN. They also mentioned that they do not have the skills needed to prepare for such learners. When asked if they are practicing Inclusion, they said they are not sure since learners with sensory disabilities are not enrolled at their school but they would like to learn more about how to


include them in their classes. Although the extrinsic factors are reported as being barriers to learning, many learners have intrinsic difficulties such as learning literacy and numeracy. These difficulties are often the consequences of the interaction between extrinsic and intrinsic factors.

### **4.3 Teachers' coping strategies**

Teachers responses as to how they cope with LSEN scholastic and behavioural difficulties.

#### **4.3.1 Learning Difficulties and how they approach problem- solving.**

Teachers were questioned about how they cope with LSEN in their classes. They mentioned the following strategies: the majority of teachers from Intermediate Phase maintained that they group learners according to their level of understanding and give learners tasks according to their abilities. Other teachers stated that they group them according to their mixed abilities:

  
*“I mixed them with more capable peers so that they can help each other.”*  
 (Response from an Intermediate Phase teacher)

Thirty percent of Intermediate Phase teachers claim that they first discuss the problems with their colleagues and give incentives to motivate the learner. If they do not have a solution they refer their problems to the T.S.T.

*“To motivate the child, I give a reward for every little improvement by praising, giving stars, attention and recognition.”* (Response from a Foundation Phase teacher)

#### **4.3.2 Teachers coping strategies for behaviour difficulties**

All of the Intermediate Phase teachers maintained that behaviour is the major problem in their school because of the location of the school. They said they normally invite guest speakers (such as nurses and doctors) to school to address the children about healthy living and the

effects of drug abuse. Some teachers speak to the parents. They also contact the parent and observe the child's behaviour in the class. The ground rules are prepared together with the class and if broken or obeyed they are treated accordingly.

*“ I observe the child's behaviour and invite the parents for information about the background of the child. I write the classroom rules together with the pupils and agree on what is to be done if one disobeys the rules. I observe the child and write down the incident whenever the bad behaviour occurs. And if he or she behaves well I reward for good behaviour.”* (Response from Foundation Phase teacher)

Teachers also mentioned that they change the methods or style of teaching and make it more fun. Other strategies mentioned were: to ask colleagues for help, to punish bad behaviour, to record incidents and to refer the learner to the T.S.T and then to the psychologist.

#### **4. 4 School organization in relation to solving problems**

All teachers maintained that they normally discuss the problem with other teachers and attempt to solve the problem on their own. They mentioned that they only invite the Strategic Management Team (SMT) and School Governing Body (SGB) if the problem is beyond their reach or if they do not find the solution.

##### **4.4.1 School-based Teacher Support Team**

Teachers maintained that there is a T.S.T in the school that meets regularly and is helpful to them. The team consists of the principal, deputy principal, learning support teacher and class teachers who represent the committees and each phase. The most prevalent issues that are referred to the teams are: academic problems such as reading and writing, behavioural problems, discipline and emotional problems, social problems such as health, lack of parental involvement and referrals. Teachers indicated a number of ways in which they feel the T.S.T could assist them in their school:

- To provide training through workshops in order to identify the barriers to learning.
- To help teachers to refer learners to specialists e.g. a psychologist, when the need of a particular child is beyond their reach.
- To problem-solve about how to overcome barriers and to share their special knowledge, ideas and experiences.

#### **4.5 Other forms of support**

Teachers maintained that support was available from NGO's, the D.S.T, and the SGB. The SGB normally helps to solve problems for the teachers or the school. They maintained that the NGO's such as READ provide the school with reading books.

##### **4.5.1 Services of an Education Support Centre (D.S.T)**

Teachers also have support from the District School Clinic, which helps by holding workshops for teachers and the T.S.T. The District Clinic also arranges for a social worker to counsel children with emotional problems, especially those orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Sixty percent of teachers said they make use of the team at the District School Clinic. But teachers are aware that the school clinic cannot always provide them with the services of a psychologist or a social worker.

##### **4.5.2 Parent's involvement in their children's learning.**

Teachers mentioned that parents are invited to meetings thrice a year but not all of them attend the meeting. Some parents get involved by volunteering to clean the schoolyard and do gardening. Teachers maintained that the educational level of the parent determines their involvement, and that they mostly rely on teachers to take responsibility for the children.

*“Parents believe that teachers are responsible for their children's learning.”* (Response from the Foundation teacher)

#### 4.6 Collaboration as a form of support

The majority of teachers maintained that they are supported by the T.S.T. They discuss the problems they encounter in the classroom with the team and together they decide on the strategies for problem-solving. They also maintained that they have a strong and informal relationship among themselves and that this collaboration offers them an opportunity to identify learning difficulties and exchange ideas on how to deal with the learners at the grade level meeting. In addition, the SGB or the other committees helps teachers with issues such as behavioural and social problems. On the other hand, some of the teachers maintained that they do not receive the support they need from the T.S.T. because it is difficult for them to practice the strategies suggested by the T.S.T in their classroom. They need the members of the team to assist them in the classroom itself.

- **Teachers views on support in the school**

The majority (70%) of the staff gave positive responses by saying that they felt supported by the T.S.T, SMT, and SGB. Five of the teachers were given support for difficult cases by being referred to the T.S.T although one teacher said that:

*“No solution has been found yet.”*

Three of the teachers (9%) said they refer and discuss problems at their grade teachers' meetings. Five teachers said that they approach other colleagues to share and discuss problems and to obtain advice - this occurs more on an informal level than through the T.S.T. They maintained that when working with others, they share views, discuss issues and are there to help each other. Two teachers were given support by the LSEN teacher and one said that she uses learning materials for support. Two gave an affirmative “yes” but did not give reasons.

Thirty percent (30%) of the staff (7 teachers) responded negatively. Two offered no specific reasons and two mentioned personal differences amongst the staff.

*“Not everyone is behind you when you deal with a challenge”.*

Two mentioned lack of equipment as a problem and one said:

*“There was no security.”*

- **Teachers’ feelings in supporting other teachers**

Most of the teachers maintained that they are able to provide help to teachers even though they are not sufficiently equipped for teaching LSEN. They are able to share their experiences and knowledge with each other. Two teachers stated that they are not confident enough to give support because they themselves are not coping with LSEN in their own classrooms. Teachers maintained that the T.S.T enlightens and empowers those who for many years have been teaching without the knowledge and skills to handle LSEN.



#### **4.7 Recommendations by the teaching staff on how to address the barriers**

The last question on the questionnaire was open-ended. It allowed the teachers to make any additional comments. They added the following recommendations:

- **In-service training**

All teachers strongly recommend in-service training and support on how to manage and teach LSEN, and to assist them to recognise problems in the classroom. They need to know how to integrate support services issues in their own classroom practices and thereby contribute to the holistic development of their students. Inclusive practices must be included in the teacher-training curriculum.

The teachers expressed the opinion that the high rate of grade repetition is due to the lack of teachers’ skills and knowledge in identifying the diverse needs of learners. Teachers maintained that they need counselling skills because some of the problems they encounter in the classroom



do not necessarily need to be treated by a professional counsellor. Teachers from both phases recommended that the Department of Education should offer seminars and workshops at least four times a year in order to upgrade their professional skills. They recommended that both pre- and in-service training for Inclusive Education should be organized so that teachers can change their attitudes as well as their teaching methods.

- **Support for teachers**

Most of the teachers supported the need for support strategies from a wide range of people who are involved in the education system, e.g. the policy makers as well as the community. In particular, they voiced the need for support from the parents to help with schoolwork at home. They recognised the need for assistance from other professionals e.g. every school should have its own psychologist and social worker to help with behavioural problems. They also suggested that Support Services should team up with the police to deal with learners who present behavioural problems. This collaboration would assist the players in the education system to deal more holistically with the problems presented. Teachers maintained that the community, the NGOs, parents and governmental services, should share ideas, knowledge and skills in order to develop a healthy school environment.

- **Parental, community and material resources**

Teachers commented on the need to form partnerships between schools and the community for capacity building and to empower parents to participate in their children's learning. They said there is a need for aftercare centres at schools to provide support for single working parents who wish keep their children off the street. Networking with community resources is vital in order to develop and support education provision. Teachers strongly recommend that they need more material resources to help learners with learning difficulties and a suitable staff member to train them.

## 4.8 Conclusion

The responses reflected the perceptions and views about the diversity of barriers to learning experienced by teachers and learners in the Khayelitsha community. These correspond to the barriers identified by NCSNET/NCESS (1997) and EWP 6 (2001). Some teachers reiterated the need to seeking help in identifying the barriers through collaboration with other staff members in the communities and the T.S.T, SGB and SMT.

## 4.9 SECTION B: Midcourse and End evaluation (During and post-intervention)

### Midcourse observation: notes from workshops

During the needs analysis, the principal and all the teaching staff mentioned that they have problems in knowing how to refer LSEN to the T.S.T. The type of form provided by the WCED was very complex and difficult to complete. The first workshop organized by the researcher and her supervisor was based on how to refer learners with difficulties. During the workshops, teachers were fully engaged because they were eager to know how to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learner from a behavioural, scholastic and social perspective. They preferred the new form and after they were given instructions, they understood how to complete it. Teachers participated fully during these workshops. They were asked to bring the behavioural case studies they had observed during class to the next workshop.

Workshop Two was aimed at addressing teachers' concerns about learners with behavioural difficulties. The Behaviour Observation workshop focused on how to manage learners with behavioural problems. The four teachers, who reported their case studies and their difficulties, had the opportunity to discuss these issues. At a subsequent workshop on discipline and behaviour management, provided as a follow-up after the evaluation of questionnaires, the teachers were again able to address these topics. The technique for behaviour observation enabled them to give more information about the learner when making a referral.

Workshop Three dealt with teaching literacy. Five teachers presented case studies from their own classes. In the workshop, teachers were grouped according to their teaching phases and asked to identify resources for literacy both from within and outside the school. After listing the

resources, they realised that they had already been making use of materials as well as applying their own skills to assist learners.

Workshop Four dealt with the topic of Cognitive Strategies. Teachers were given activities and were asked to study the problem and find solutions.

The topic of class management was addressed in Workshop Five during which the teachers were asked to prioritize what they really need to know about classroom management. Their own case studies that they had presented in Workshop Two were used for problem-solving with regard to the management of these learners in their classroom. These last two workshops were not evaluated by the post-intervention questionnaire.

This section covers the responses about how teachers are able to address barriers to learning and development. The following responses were captured after the literacy workshop which was held to train teachers to assist slow readers. Some teachers from the Foundation phase said that they normally hold 'catch-up' classes after school for children with reading difficulties. The approach is to introduce a new lesson to these learners beforehand so that it is easier for them when the lesson is introduced to the whole class. Intermediate Phase teachers said they normally invite the parents to discuss the child's problem and encourage the parents to help the child at home.

These teachers maintained that they have tried to encourage the parents to form their own organization so that they can support one another but this has not yet happened. Intermediate Phase teachers have also encouraged pupils to do peer tutoring which was a strategy discussed during the workshop. They find that the system of stronger pupils teaching weaker pupils is more beneficial for learners with learning difficulties because they feel comfortable to help each other and it is easy for them to ask questions. Teachers said that they normally group learners and give a task to the group after which each group gives feedback to the whole class. This is in an effort to reduce the high rate of grade repetition and drop-out.

In addressing behavioural problems, teachers invite guest speakers such as policemen to address the learners on drug abuse, crime and theft. Parents and other community leaders are also invited to address the learners. Teachers also maintained that they refer problems encountered in the classroom to the T.S.T. The problems are discussed and strategies are put in place.

#### **4.10. Observation at T.S.T Meetings: 2 September, 2002**

During the T.S.T meetings, the researcher's aim was to observe the T.S.T's coping strategies in providing support for teachers of LSEN and the school in general. The T.S.T provided an opportunity for teachers to collaborate and support one another and to discuss the barriers that learners experience in the classroom. This was evident when a Grade One teacher volunteered to assist the Grade Four teachers with the learners in her class who cannot read. The T.S.T helped to develop more collaborative work among teachers and between their own members. The nature of the problems, which the regular teachers brought to the T.S.T, was mainly behavioural and scholastic. The T.S.T, together with the teacher, discussed the problem and decided on teaching strategies and how to design an Individual Educational Program for the learner. The focus of the T.S.T was on teachers solving problems collectively among themselves before asking for additional help or support from other professionals or the D.S.T.

The researcher observed the case studies that the teachers referred to the committee and then to the T.S.T. At the T.S.T meeting, the case of the learner Nandipha, was under discussion. She is an over age learner with emotional problems, she cannot concentrate in class and cries easily. She was also observed in the Grade Three class. (Appendix G - case study)

#### **The T.S.T.'s Responses**

The team advised the Grade Three teacher to talk to Nandipha about the situation at home. She was advised to invite the aunt to school or alternatively the teacher should visit the girl's home. They advised her to obtain background information about the family from the aunt. Another idea was to interview the previous teacher about the performance of the girl and what she had done to help the learner. The team suggested that the girl should be given tasks according to the level of her ability. She should not be given work to take home, but should complete the work at

school. Nandipha could be given responsibilities in class. The T.S.T advised the class teacher to tell Nandipha that she was concerned about her behaviour, and that she should try to improve it. In addition, during the T.S.T discussion, the Grade One teacher promised to take the girl to her ‘catch-up classes’.

#### **4.10.1 Classroom observation (see case studies in Appendix G)**

Four lessons were observed on different days. As the researcher, I collected data and made journal entries on the following case studies that were referred to the T.S.T by the class teachers, and included in the data collection. I observed a specific learner, who was experiencing barriers to learning and development, and in each class was given some information about the learner with SEN. The focus was on how the class teacher accommodates the LSEN in the mainstream classroom.

1. On 2 September 2002, the researcher observed Grade Four learners who could not read. Mrs T, the class teacher, held a small group programme for reading sight words for Dumisa, a boy who could not read, along with three other learners. During the T.S.T meetings, the Grade One teacher, Mrs N, volunteered to assist the Grade Four learners who could read.
2. On 11 September 2002, the researcher observed the Grade Four learners including Dumisa. The Grade One teacher taught them three-letter words.
3. On 11 September 2002, the researcher observed a Grade Three teacher who was concerned about Nandipha’s behaviour. Mrs S applied behaviour observation rating to Nandipha. (See case in appendix G)
4. On 28 September 2002 and 29 September 2002, Mrs N, the same Grade One teacher, volunteered to help the Grade Three learners who could not read. During the class she gave a literature-based lesson and read a story. Mrs S observed while Mrs N taught the techniques to the learners. Thus Mrs S was able to learn from the Grade One teacher, and then apply these methods in her own class.

## **Classroom Observation Grade Four**

### **1. Observation notes (2 September 2002) (Dumisa case study Appendix G)**

At 9:30 a.m. during my classroom visit, I noticed that there were a number of LSEN in the class that I had previously observed in the Grade Four class including Dumisa. I noticed that some learners could not read three-letter words. The teacher pointed to the word, and asked the children to read after her. Then she asked one child to point at the word for the rest of the class to read. I noticed three learners who could not read and who always repeated the word after the whole class. The teacher took the three learners aside and prepared a separate programme for this small group. She introduced a game/activity for them and noticed that these learners needed extra attention. Each learner was asked to take a word from the box and read it aloud. This was done for almost 15 minutes. The learners were asked to pick up words which they could not read, and then the teacher assisted them in sounding out the word. Dumisa managed to read only two words, and even while he was reading he seemed to be uncertain of the word. He whispered the word and needed confirmation from the teacher before he would say it aloud. The teacher asked them to write five words and to show them to her the following day.



## **Scholastic Observation Grade Four**

### **2. Observation notes (11 September 2002)**

The following week, on 11 September 2002, I visited the same Grade Four classroom. The Grade One teacher, who volunteered to assist the Grade Four teacher, was in the class helping learners who cannot read. She used Grade One techniques by showing the learners the big chart with pictures. She asked them to name something they know from the picture, and then she wrote the word on the board with the help of the learners, who sounded the words. The words were three-letter words such as: cup, can, cap, cat, cow and car. She then asked them to sound the first letter, then the second and finally the third. Then she asked them to clap the letter sounds e.g. c-a-p and to find the similarities between the words. Learners identified the first sound in the words as letter “C” which was the correct sound. All the words are one syllable and have three letters. The teacher was applying the methods and skills that had been introduced in the workshop on literacy.

### **Behavioural Observation Grade Three**

#### **3. Observation notes (18 September 2002)** (Nadipha case study Appendix G)

On Wednesday at 10:30a.m., I observed a Grade Three classroom. The teacher pointed out Nandipha, whose behaviour worried her the most. I sat at the back of the classroom as the teacher continued with her lesson. There were about 54 learners in the classroom. The learners seemed to be very attentive while the teacher was speaking. The teacher did what she calls 'warm up exercises', based on the weather chart. She used pictures, which resemble the different kinds of weather and asked the learners to talk about the weather e.g. a picture of a girl holding an umbrella. The learners were very excited with the exercise. Nandipha was easily distracted and she tried to catch the attention of those near her by pinching and laughing at them. She moved from one place to another. The teacher used the behaviour observation chart that was introduced to the teachers during the workshop on behaviour observation. The teacher asked them to draw whatever they like and then describe their pictures to the whole class. When the teacher left the classroom, Nandipha started singing and playing.



### **Classroom Observation Grade Three**

#### **4. Observation notes (28 September 2002)**

On 28 September 2002 at 10:00a.m., I observed the Grade One teacher Mrs N, who had volunteered to help Grade Three learners with reading difficulties. The teacher told the learners to sit in a semi-circle on the mat so they could see her. She then provided them with instructions. She told them that she was going to read a story from the book. First she introduced the front page and then the back page of the book. The children discussed the pictures on the front page and then the back page before reading the story. They were expected to remember any five words they had heard while the teacher was reading.

After reading the story, the teacher asked one of the children to volunteer to relate the story with the help of others if the child struggled. Then the teacher handed out a big box and placed several words in front of the learners. Each learner was asked to pick up a word which they had heard in the story and read it aloud to each other. Then the teacher asked the learners to make up their own stories by drawing pictures, and to bring their pictures the following day. The teacher

was practicing the methods which she said she learnt from the workshop that had been held by the EMDC school clinic. She found that after attending the UWC lecturers' literacy workshop, she felt more confident in applying the methods of teaching a whole language approach.

### **Continuation Grade Three**

#### **Observation notes (29 September 2002)**

At 10a.m. the next day I observed the volunteer teacher from Grade One. Each learner was asked to place their pictures from the previous day on the wall and relate to the others a story about their pictures. As the learner explained the meaning of the picture, the teacher wrote down sentences for the learner and together they read the story. It was easy for the learners to create their own storybooks with the help of the teacher. What I observed was that learners were more interested in reading their own books, which they displayed on the wall. Each learner was asked to tell the story to the whole class who were happy because they felt that they had contributed to the task. Learners who at first struggled with reading later found it easier because they managed to obtain meaning from the text by relating it to the pictures.



#### **4.11 General comments of both the Teacher Support Team and the classroom teachers**

The case studies that were observed at T.S.T meetings and in the classroom highlighted the issues of behavioural problems, attributed to circumstances of poverty, social issues, family breakdown and parental neglect. The regular class teacher does not have the skills to deal with social problems and scholastic problems, which they previously had thought were due to laziness, absenteeism and lack of parental involvement. The researcher observed collaboration between the teachers such as the Grade One teacher who assisted Grade Three and Grade Four learners with reading tuition. All the above-mentioned issues can be addressed by the networking of all educators and other professionals, a well-functioning T.S.T and parental involvement.



#### 4.12 Results of the questionnaires to evaluate the workshops

The value of the workshops was assessed by the evaluation questionnaires that were given to all teaching staff. Teachers, who had to rank the workshops from most valuable to least valuable, completed 26 questionnaires.

- Describe what was useful in the workshops

The teachers responded with comments that were analyzed and presented in Table 4.6. Responses were clustered into the following themes; the numbers indicate the frequency of the responses.

**Table 4.5**

**Usefulness of the workshops      Number of responses**

a) Referral form	14
b) How to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learner	5
c) How to identify the needs of the school	7
d) The presentations of the workshops were very practical	8

Teachers maintained that one of the most useful aspects of the workshops was how to fill in the new-format referral form as provided by U.W.C lecturers. The previous form provided by the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED) was complicated. The new referral form required them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learner, a task that had been more difficult prior to attending the workshops. Teachers mentioned that they participated fully because the workshops were practical and it was easy for them to follow what they had done.

- **Describe what was not useful**

A few teachers mentioned that they found the workshop to be less valuable in that they were expecting help in the classroom where it is needed most. They would have liked the researcher and the university lecturers to demonstrate in the classroom itself how to handle learners with behavioural problems and how to address LSEN.

- **What have you learnt that has helped you in the classroom?**

Teachers mentioned that they have learnt how to identify the problems of the learners. They feel more confident in handling a learner with behavioural problems and how and when to refer the child. Teachers maintained that the following areas of the workshops helped them in the classroom. They learnt how to:

- a) Deal with learners with behavioural problems
- b) Identify barriers to learning and development
- c) Deal with the diverse needs of the learner
- d) Manage a large classroom.



- **Explain what you gained in making referrals**

They all agreed that the format of the new referral forms was clearly formulated. Fifteen teachers mentioned that it is easier to identify the learner's difficulty when using the form provided by the university lecturer. They further stated that they now tackle the problems in the classroom with help from colleagues in their own grade instead of referring the learner to the committee and the T.S.T as a first step.

- **Explain in what way you would be able to support other teachers**

Most of the teachers mentioned that they can provide support by assisting others with referrals, are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the child and can now conduct behavioural

observation. They maintained that they could assist other teachers in how to teach learners who cannot read.

- **Rate the usefulness of the following workshops**

Here the teacher had to rate each of the first three workshops according to their usefulness.

**Table 4.6**

<b>Workshops</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>
a) Identifying barriers and strengths and weaknesses	15
b) Behaviour observation	6
c) Literacy	5
Total	26

Results of rating of workshop - (1 was the least and 5 was the most)

Many teachers stated that Workshop One on the identification of barriers and strengths and weaknesses was the most useful, followed by the workshop on behavioural observation. The workshop on literacy observation was rated third, because they had already attended similar workshops organized by the WCED. The evaluation of the workshops produced some positive results. The new referral form was accepted as part of the procedure. Knowing how to identify the barriers had been a problem for the teacher. The procedure for rating the learner's behaviour in order to identify the need was adapted by all teachers before completing the new referral form. After being shown how to do a behaviour observation chart, how to observe a learner in the class and how to fill in the new form, teachers felt much more confident when making referrals. They also provided the T.S.T with more information about the learner. It was also gratifying for the researcher to note that the techniques that were shown in the workshops were being applied in the classroom e.g. reading techniques.

#### 4.12.1 Post-Intervention End evaluation. Focus group interviews (responses from the T.S.T)

A focus group interview was conducted with the members of the Teacher Support Team. The following responses were recorded:

- **The T.S.T's views regarding the inclusion of LSEN in the mainstream classroom**

Eighty percent of the T.S.T members maintained that it is correct to include learners with learning disabilities in the ordinary classroom. T.S.T members maintained that when children with different abilities are taught together in the same classroom, it encourages the learners to accept individual differences. They maintained that Inclusive Education is an issue of human rights for all learners, and allows the learners with LSEN to attend their local school. This means that some learners are not forced to walk long distances to attend a special school. Teachers maintained that Inclusive Education is an interesting and challenging phenomenon and with the advent of Curriculum 2005, learners can be taught at their own pace through learner-centred lessons.



*"Inclusive Education gives learners with difficulties the opportunity to interact with their peers. (Response from T.S.T members)*

On the other hand, 20% of the team members maintained that Inclusive Education is a difficult policy to implement because learners with diverse needs are expected to learn together in the same classroom. This presents as a challenge for these children because teachers do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with the diverse needs of learners. They said there are teachers in special schools who are specifically trained for special needs learners. They further argue that the other barrier to the effectiveness of Inclusive Education is the high pupil/teacher ratio. Teachers become frustrated when they are expected to attend to every individual need in an overcrowded classroom. In addition, they complained about the lack of resources for those kinds of learners and that they do not have the knowledge to develop suitable materials for such learners.

- **Challenges of implementing Inclusive Education**

According to all the team members, Inclusive Education makes them feel less skilled because they cannot adequately assist some of the learners with problems. Sometimes they even found it difficult to identify the child's problems because of inadequate training in special educational needs.

- **What kind of issues do teachers encounter in the classroom?**

The team maintained that they were confronted daily with barriers in the classroom i.e. behavioural, emotional and scholastic barriers.

- **What are your contributions in helping teachers with problems?**

The T.S.T maintained that teachers refer the problem to the team. The team tries to solve the problem collaboratively. After discussion they decide on strategies. This means that they are working as a link between the teacher and the parents. Thus they invite the parents and teachers to discuss the child's problem together. If there are too many barriers, they ask for help from the WCED School Clinic in their district. The team mentioned that they sometimes teach collaboratively with the class teacher in the classroom if the teacher asks for help.

- **How does the Teacher Support Team assist in developing their capacity and skill?**

Members of the team maintained that they gain experience by working with the team. The strategy suggested by the T.S.T assists teachers to manage the learners in their classroom:

*“Each has his/her own talent: we share ideas and experiences, we put them together and come to a solution to help teachers with their common daily problems”.* (Response from a T.S.T member)

A well-functioning T.S.T and the willingness to work together, provides support to teachers and enables them to face the challenges in the classroom.

- **Are parents involved in their children's learning?**

The T.S.T members said that they are trying their best to involve the parents in their children's learning at school. They invite the parents to discuss their children's problem whenever the teacher refers the child to them. The usual procedure is to discuss the problem with the teacher and the parent. The T.S.T draws up a programme for the teacher and for the parent to use at home. If the learner's problem cannot be addressed, they refer the child to other professionals. They inform the parent beforehand about the learner's referral to the psychologist or social worker. On the contrary, some T.S.T members said that not all parents come to school when asked to do so. The reasons were that some are working far from home and that the children remain on their own at home.

*“Some parents are afraid to come to school because they realise that their children are having learning difficulties. They feel ashamed and live in the fear that the teachers are planning to expel the child from school”.*

(Response a from Senior Phase teacher, a member of the T.S.T).

- **Did you benefit from the workshops that were held for you?**

Members of the team maintained that there were many benefits. They mentioned that it is up to them and the teachers to apply the knowledge which they have gained in the classroom. Teachers took responsibility for their classes and use the knowledge they have gained.

#### **4.12.2 Recommendations arising from the focus group interview conducted for the Teacher Support Team**

- **Scholastic problems**

All members of the T.S.T strongly recommend that the Education Department or the school need to address the following issues.

- a) Teachers of special educational needs should have access to in-service training.
- b) A flexible curriculum needs to be developed to attend to the diverse needs of all learners.
- c) The Department of Education should introduce a programme for basic adult education in order to improve the parents' literacy skills so that they can assist the learners how to read.
- d) The Department should see to it that they involve all the professionals and utilise all resources both within and outside the school i.e. the community should be involved.
- e) Teachers need to be provided with support from all those involved in the education system.
- f) The Department should provide more teachers and classrooms in order to reduce the high pupil/teacher ratio.
- g) The school should limit its enrolment of children if there are not enough classes and not enough teachers.

- **Community and social problems**

The T.S.T recommended that the Department of Education should provide a social worker and a psychologist for every school. The community should be involved in the school and there should be a good relationship between them. The school and the community should work together to fight issues such as HIV/AIDS and celebrate HIV/AIDS awareness together. The resources in the area surrounding the school could be used to develop and support education provision.

- **In-service training**

Teachers need training in special educational needs in order to deal with the diverse needs of learners and to develop suitable materials for such learners. Teachers maintained that they need more seminars and workshops to upgrade their professional qualities.

- **Parental involvement**

The Teacher Support Team strongly recommended the involvement of parents in their children's learning. They maintained that parents should be encouraged to form support groups through which they can improve their parental skills.

### 4.13 Conclusions

In this chapter the data from different sources was presented and issues in the area of the study were divided into two sections:

**Section A:** the baseline questionnaire contained two aspects:

- Identifying the barriers to learning and development,
- Support needed by the teachers of LSEN in the mainstream.

**Section B:** Post-workshop questionnaire and focus group notes; field notes from observation at T.S.T meetings and in the classroom.

- How teachers addressed the barriers and the strategies that can be adopted,
- Changes in teachers' attitudes towards LSEN and the need for in-service training along the lines of Inclusive Education.

The observation in the classroom and at T.S.T meetings confirmed the type of barriers with which teachers are confronted and gave the researcher the opportunity to observe the coping strategies used by teachers when teaching LSEN. The teachers have been resourceful in the past and there is a need to encourage them to foster confidence in their own abilities. Although there had been a positive shift in attitudes towards including LSEN, teachers still had the tendency to want to shift the responsibility to others i.e. the Grade One teacher who gave extra classes to the slow readers. In the Grades Three and Four classes it was noted that the Grade Four teacher did apply the necessary skills in teaching literacy and the Grade Three teacher made use of the behaviour observation chart. On the other hand, the collaboration between grades is a positive shift, such as when the teachers allowed the Grade One teacher to come into their classrooms. It is therefore evident that the Grade Three and Grade Four teachers are willing to learn much from the Grade One teacher.

The concluding comments and recommendations will be discussed in the next chapter. The information derived from this section, although reported separately in section A and section B, will be integrated into the final chapter.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion and research results**

#### **5. Introduction**

This chapter is the discussion of the results as reported in the previous chapter. The results were gathered throughout the research study by means of baseline questionnaires, midcourse observation and field notes and the end i.e. focus group interviews with the T.S.T and evaluation questionnaires from the entire staff. The limitations and the strengths of the research are discussed and this is followed by the conclusion and recommendations.

#### **5.1 The barriers to learning and development in the environment (social and political context)**

In this study, I investigated: a) the development of knowledge and skills for teachers to be able to identify and address the barriers to learning and b) to ascertain how the school can provide support to teachers and learners. Barriers to learning and development may be intrinsic, extrinsic or interactive. Taking into account all the barriers that have been discussed, is it feasible to suppose that this school can accommodate all learners who experience barriers? In the needs analysis it was revealed that the T.S.T needed to be developed.

From the analysis of the responses from the teaching staff and the T.S.T focus group, it appeared there was agreement that behavioural problems are major barriers to learning in the school. This was attributed to the disadvantaged social context of the environment in which the families live. There was consensus amongst the teaching staff, including the T.S.T, that behavioural problems of the learner lead to failure and underachievement. As stated by the NCSNET/NCESS (Department of Education 1997), barriers to learning can be located within the learner, within the centre of learning, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context.

The NCSNET/NCESS (1997) and White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001), identified the following barriers in the environment: socio-economic, poverty, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. These factors place

the learners and youth 'at risk' and lead to family breakdown. Responses from the focus group interviews confirmed that these barriers contribute to school failure and drop-out. It appears that these factors are still very prevalent and may even be increasing. Consequently the teaching staff, including the T.S.T members, felt that these problems represent wider issues in the macro-system and that they cannot deal with them directly. They also believed that they cannot ignore the other systems and therefore recommendations are made on how to elicit support from parents and how to involve the district and the community.

### **5.1.2 The social environment as a barrier**

The teachers stated that the lack of motivation of the learners stemmed from the home environment, where they lacked positive role models due to parental neglect. Other contributing factors were the prevalence of crime and violence and being in the company of learners who are likely to imitate those undesirable behaviours. The teachers also mentioned the high rate of unemployment and poverty as factors. Some parents in Khayelitsha earn their living by selling drugs and learners bring those drugs to school. They maintained that most of the learners who have discipline problems are from single parent families. Kapp (1991) supported the notion that, in a non-supportive environment, the child does not experience healthy relationships with the family. Poverty and its accompanying problems are generally responsible for the inadequate environment. Parents of such a family cannot offer the child a world that reflects the life pattern as presented by the school.

The T.S.T focus group also expressed concern that most of the learners are from poor families, some of whom live in a one-roomed house. This room is often used for multi- purposes and it is not easy for children to study in that kind of environment. As stated in Kapp (1991:125), an inadequate physical environment can be a cause of environmental deprivation. Inadequate housing and overcrowding deprive the child of privacy and a suitable space to study. The majority of learners in the school under study live and are reared in this environment.

The responses from the T.S.T focus group interview, and from the teaching staff post-questionnaires, indicate that poverty in families contributes to underachievement, grade

repetition and failures. In addition, hunger sometimes forces parents to leave children with relatives who abuse them. Mobility is another barrier as people in Khayelitsha frequently move from one place to another. Teachers felt that learners cannot achieve well in their studies if they live in homes that are stricken by poverty.

They also believe that family breakdown has a negative effect on learning because children are forced to choose between living with either the father or the mother. Disciplinary problems, which appear in the classroom, are often attributed to negative experiences at home. The death of parents has an effect on children's learning, especially the parents who are victims of HIV/AIDS. These children are left alone and circumstances force them to take on the responsibility of caring for siblings.

### **5.1.3 Barriers in the education system**

- **Lack of, and the need for teacher in-service training in Inclusive Education**

In this research, the teaching staff explored several issues during the needs analysis, in their responses to baseline questionnaires, during the T.S.T meetings and through classroom observation. This research revealed that there is a need to provide specialized training that would train each teacher for Inclusive Education. This would enable them to deal with LSEN and to enable teachers to cope when teaching these learners in a mainstream class. The importance of up-grading the teacher's knowledge and skills was raised during the workshops and during the completion of the baseline questionnaires. The teachers mentioned that the WCED should give a full training course for teachers. Similar studies have also found that the development of human resources through pre-service and in-service training programmes is a priority (NEPI, 1992). Naicker (1999) supports the notion that every teacher should become a special educator through in-service training workshops and other forums.

The responses from the baseline questionnaires(pre- intervention) show that teachers feel they are inadequately trained and therefore do not possess the necessary skills to cope with the demand of teaching LSEN. They consider the courses offered by the Department of Education through school clinics to be insufficient and recommended that teachers should be given

opportunities to up-grade their skills and knowledge so that they can gain a better understanding of LSEN. The regular class teachers felt that they need to be competent enough to assess LSEN and to be able to plan the Individual Educational Program (IEP). This became evident to the researcher during classroom observation when the learner persisted in distracting others and the teacher did not have any idea about how to manage the behaviour. She thus continued with the lesson and ignored the troublesome learner. This observation took place before the behavioural observation workshop.

The evaluation of the workshops (post –intervention) produced some positive results. The input from Workshops One and Two on how to identify the problem was considered extremely useful. After being shown how to do a behaviour observation while observing the learners in the class, as well as how to complete a new referral form, the teachers communicated that they felt more confident when making referrals to the T.S.T. They were able to provide the T.S.T with more specific information when the learner was discussed. It was also gratifying for the researcher to observe how the techniques and strategies to improve reading and spelling skills were applied in the class or during the “extra” classes.



During the needs analysis and the workshops, the high pupil/teacher ratio was mentioned as a barrier to learning. Regular class teachers reported that the high pupil/teacher ratio and the inadequate number of teaching staff create difficulties for classroom management. This notion is supported by the study of NCSET/NCESS (1997) that poverty-stricken communities are often characterised by limited educational facilities, large classes with a high pupil/teacher ratio, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning materials. This also became evident during the classroom observation where the number of learners in the Foundation Phase classes ranged from between 60-70 and made it impossible for the teacher to attend to the needs of each learner.

- **Lack of parental involvement**

Teachers, including the members of T.S.T, were concerned that parents were minimally involved in their children's learning. Since most of the parents are illiterate, they abdicate the

responsibility to the teachers. Kapp (1991) supported the notion that, in the education of children with problems, close co-operation between parents and teachers is considered most important. The co-operation of the parents is necessary for the effective instruction of the child. Parents are able to provide important information concerning the child and can help in applying the same educational procedures at home. The White Paper 6 (2001) also emphasises the importance of parental involvement in their children's learning. Teachers felt that offering programmes to parents would place them in a better position to understand what the education of their children is all about. This was an issue that was raised in the baseline questionnaires and at the T.S.T focus group interview. Although parental involvement was an issue, it was addressed mainly at the T.S.T meetings as it appertained to particular children. The issue needed to be addressed by the school as a whole.

- **Curriculum and collaboration between teachers**

The teachers indicate that inadequate training in Special Educational Needs leads to learning breakdown and the drop-out of learners. Because of inadequate training, teachers may use teaching styles and methods that do not suit all learners. Wade (1992) stated that a restricted curriculum is both socially and educationally unsound. It denies learners the opportunity to take part in the regular classroom activities with the peer group. In this study, collaboration among learners was encouraged so that they could work in pairs and in a group – this leads to positive attitudes, interaction and learning. Teachers' responses during the workshop emphasise the need for involvement of the teachers in the process of curriculum design, especially in the outcome-based system of education. Teachers learnt that the sharing of knowledge and expertise with each other is vital. This was evident during the T.S.T meeting when a Grade One teacher volunteered to assist Grade Three and Grade Four teachers with learners who could not read, and then followed this up by modelling lessons for weak readers in their classes.

- **Teachers' attitudes**

At the end of the intervention, during the focus group interview with the T.S.T, the teachers responded more positively about their opinions regarding inclusion. They said it was good to

include LSEN in the mainstream and not discriminate against them, provided that they have resources. They saw the advantages of LSEN being with their peers but were still concerned about overcrowded classrooms.

## **5.2 Addressing barriers to learning and development**

- **Support services**

According to Engelbrecht (2001), in order to achieve appropriate support services provision, education support would have to be available and accessible to all schools. In this case study, the regular teachers, including the members of the T.S.T, agreed on collaboration and co-operation amongst teachers, and that the education support professionals should share their skills and knowledge with each other. Muthukrishna (2001) supported the notion that to address barriers to learning and participation is at the heart of school-based change and school improvement. Teachers should change their attitudes towards LSEN and the school needs to change its policy so that it can favour every learner regardless of disability. The attitudes of some teachers towards LSEN become more positive after the intervention. This change became evident during classroom observation, when teachers practiced the techniques acquired during the first three workshops.

### **5.2.1 Particular strategies for addressing barriers**

During the first workshop on ‘identifying the strengths and weaknesses’, the teachers mentioned the following strategies which they used to address the barriers:

- They motivated children by giving rewards for improvement in scholastic work and behaviour. Donald et al. (1997) state that in order to build the scholastic confidence of the child, the teacher should design learning tasks during which the student can be aware of and be applauded for each step of progress.
- They conduct after-school ‘catch up classes’ for children with learning difficulties.

- They invite the parents to discuss the child's problem and plan strategies for intervention management with the teacher. The T.S.T, when dealing with referrals, invited the parents and planned a programme both for the class teacher and the parent at home.
- The T.S.T has the following sub-committees that work together with the teachers and learners: the behavioural and discipline committee, the academic (literacy and numeracy) committee and the environmental and parental committee. Since the leader of each committee was also a member of the T.S.T, collaboration between the committees and the T.S.T was encouraged and fostered.

### **5.3 Recommendations from workshop evaluation questionnaires and the Teacher Support Team focus group interview held at the end**

The recommendations explained in this section are responses from the teaching staff post-workshop questionnaire and the Teacher Support Teams focus group interviews.

According to the evaluation questionnaires and focus groups, the T.S.T maintained that they would like to promote the following:

1. Capacity-building within the school to support learners, teachers and parents.
2. Professionals to assist them in learning and teaching.
3. Community leaders and non-governmental organization (NGOs) in the community should foster collaborative ways of working with schools and between the school and the community.

Even though the teachers did express some benefits from the workshops, these were not sufficient to fulfil their greater need.

- **School-based Support for teachers at school**

At the end of the research study, teachers strongly recommended that the T.S.T should function effectively in order to give the necessary support to teachers as a means to reduce barriers to learning and development. The in-service training in this regard is essential in order that the T.S.T may fulfill the following roles:

- a) Identification of the school's needs, in particular when addressing barriers to learning and the development of the learners and educators.
- b) Focusing on educators' development and parental support.
- c) Drawing on the resources needed by the teachers, from the financial and human resources available both within and outside the school
- d) Developing a good working relationship between the school, parents and the community.
- f) Collaborative problem-solving amongst teachers and T.S.T.

Evans (2000) supports the notion that staff must recognise their limits and learn to work with other specially trained teachers in the school in order to develop team-teaching methods. Although there were some benefits from the intervention and the T.S.T was beginning to function by working collaboratively towards a common goal, this is a process that develops over a long period of time. The research was held over a limited time period and though the changes were limited, the teachers did begin to feel more optimistic. The teachers contend that the support from the T.S.T gears them for solving academic difficulties and that they have been offered strategies to address these difficulties. They also appreciated the fact that the LSEN teacher worked alongside the classroom teachers.

- **Education Support Services at District level**

According to Creese, Daniels and Norwich (2000), the idea of schools which aim to develop support structures that allow professionals to interact and share knowledge with fellow teachers, is likely to have positive outcomes. The entire staff and the T.S.T pointed out that they need support from colleagues and other professionals for effective teaching and learning to occur. They stated that they need social workers to assist with learner's behavioural problems and they need support from psychologists to assist them to deal with children with emotional and academic problems.

They believed that the Department of Education should ensure that the above-mentioned specialists are available in each school because they cannot handle the problems without help



from other professionals. Teachers maintained that when experiences, knowledge and ideas are shared, they would benefit and change their negative attitude towards learners with learning difficulties because they would understand the reason why some children behave the way they do. Teachers maintained that the Department of Education, both at head office and district level, needs to be committed and to support the school and the community.

- **Community support**

Results from both sources strongly recommend the need for community support to prevent barriers to learning and development. Teachers mentioned the need to utilise support from the community and to harness the internal and external resources of the school. They maintained that community leaders, NGOs, parents and caregivers, volunteers, traditional healers, special schools in their capacity as resource centres, the District Education Support Team (DST) and community resources, should all contribute towards the process of teaching and learning at schools.



They maintained that the above-mentioned resources could be of help especially with managing behavioural and social problems that are the major barriers to learning in their school. They recommended that the community could form a youth club that would keep the children busy after school and during weekends and holidays.

*“Community support helps in developing the community so that children grow up in a more supportive environment”.* (Response from a team member)

Teachers felt that behavioural problems can be met by effective collaboration between school and community because they do not have enough time and energy in the school environment to address all the challenges they face. Some people in community organizations understand some of the issues better than they do, and they could help to address the challenges.

*“When the school works together with the community, a very close and positive relationship is likely to occur.”* (response from one of the teachers)

#### **5.4 Limitation of the research study**

The following limitations are recognised in this study:

- The study was conducted at one specific school and the sample may not be generalisable to all Khayelitsha schools.
- In the baseline questionnaire teachers made fewer comments on their attitude towards learners with learning difficulties than was anticipated.
- The teachers’ understanding of inclusion was not fully explored and needed more in-depth research.
- The questionnaire and the workshops were conducted in English because the researcher and the participants did not understand each other’s home language. The researcher is Sesotho-speaking while the interviewees are Xhosa-speaking. The participants did not express themselves clearly in English and there were some details that needed clarification in their home language.
- Too many workshops were held by the WCED on the same day, which meant teachers were absent from some of these project workshops.
- All the workshops were conducted after school and teachers were tired.
- The needs mentioned by the teachers were so many that for the limited time available, the U.W.C lecturer and the researcher could only offer a portion of what was requested. The time span for this intervention was too short.
- Workshops and data gathering were delayed due to the fact that the school was not ready for the study to commence.
- Due to the time constraint, the evaluation of the workshops was done for the first three workshops before the entire series of five workshops was complete.
- Case studies have limitations.
- There was a lack of access to the parent’s perspectives.

### **The strengths of the study**

- Ninety-six percent of the baseline questionnaires were completed and collected.
- The participants attended workshops in high numbers and they participated fully.
- The workshops were conducted after school hours, and even though this was stressful for the teachers, the workshops elicited their co-operation. The principal of the school was supportive of the project.

### **5.5 Recommendations for future research**

This research focused on how to develop and access human and material resources within the school. Following on this study, other projects run by the Faculty of Education at U.W.C. offered workshops on community profiling at the school under study. These approaches aimed to equip educators with the necessary knowledge on how to draw on all possible resources. The other team also researched this process so that the T.S.T could be supported and motivated at the same time. This type of research on support services should be extended to other schools in other areas.



### **5.6 Conclusion**

This study highlighted the need for an effectively functioning T.S.T in schools. In addition, it recommended Education Support Services and community support to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Inclusive Education is driven by the need to provide support services for LSEN (EWP, 6 2001). Khayelitsha is one of many townships in South Africa which was segregated along racial lines during the apartheid era. Many barriers were highlighted; in particular the lack of human and material resources available at the school. There is a high rate of unemployment among families; and poverty, crime, theft and drug abuse also prevails. Children from this kind of environment are exposed to many hazards, and are consequently at risk when it comes to learning.

It is only with the help from well-qualified and informed teachers, other professionals, parents and the community that the children from this environment could benefit optimally from a

school education. The above-mentioned barriers lead to underachievement and a high failure and drop-out rate. Only through adequate training and capacity-building will the school system be able to address these barriers.

At present, teachers are working after school hours by providing 'catch up' or 'extra classes' for learners with special educational needs. The school has a Teacher Support Team and teachers are willing to share their experiences and ideas among themselves. The learning support teacher also provides support by working alongside the class teacher. Wade (1992:101) supports the notion that "the sharing of responsibilities between staff members ensures support not only for individual children, but for individual members of staff."



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**APPENDIX A**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE ON TEACHER SUPPORT TEAMS (TST)**

**Name of school** :.....

**Date** :.....

**Subject or learning area** :.....  
.....

**Grade/s** :.....

**Position in school** :.....

Please answer the following questions. Please give as much information as possible.

1. How do you feel when a learner with learning difficulties attends your class?

.....  
.....  
.....



2. Is there grade repetition and dropout in this school?

.....  
.....  
.....

3(a) Which factor/s could be causing learning breakdown?

.....  
.....  
.....

3(b) Rank the above factors in order of priority starting with the most urgent needs.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. How do you usually address these problems in the class?  
a) Learning difficulties

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

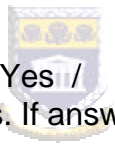
b] behavior difficulties?.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. How do you usually address any problems relating to school organization or staff members?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

6. Do you have a Teacher Support Team at your school?

Yes / / No / /

6.1 Are you a member of the TST? Yes / / No / /  
If yes answer the following questions. If answer is "No" go to number 7.



.....  
.....

6.2 How many members are there in your Teacher Support Team?

.....  
.....

6.3 Composition of team? .....

.....  
.....

6.4 How often does the team meet? .....

.....  
.....

7. Describe the kind of issues that the team deals with? Give examples

.....  
.....  
.....

8. Do you have any other form of support?

.....  
.....  
.....

9. Do you make use of the services of an education support center / school clinic in your area?

.....  
.....  
.....

10. In your teaching how do you address learners with different needs?

.....  
.....  
.....

11. To what extent are parents involved in their children's learning?

.....  
.....  
.....



12. Do you feel well supported at your school? Give reasons for your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....

13. Do you feel adequate in giving support to other teachers and / or parents?

Yes / / No / /

Give reasons for your answer

.....  
.....  
.....

14. Is there something else you would like to tell us?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



**APPENDIX B**

**QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE WHOLE STAFF ABOUT WORKSHOPS HELD AT SCHOOL.**

1. Describe what was useful in the T.S.T workshops held in your school?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Describe what was not valuable

.....  
.....  
.....

3. What have you learn that has helped you in the classroom?



.....  
.....  
.....

4. Explain what you have gained in making referrals.

.....  
.....  
.....

5. Explain on what way would you be able to support other teachers

.....  
.....  
.....

6. Rate the usefulness of the following workshops

**A] IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.**

Least useful

Most useful

1            2            3            4            5





**APPENDIX C**

**FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM.**

1. What are your opinions regarding the Policy of Inclusive education?

.....  
.....

2. Mention the challenges that face Inclusive Education.

.....  
.....  
.....

3. What kind of issues are teachers face in their everyday teaching?

.....  
.....  
.....

4. What are your contributions to the teacher's problems?

.....  
.....  
.....



5. How does the Teacher Support Team assist in developing their capacity and skills?

.....  
.....

6. In what way are parent involvements in their children's learning?

.....  
.....

7. Did you benefit from the workshops, which were held for you?

.....  
.....

8. Do you have any kind of support?

.....  
.....

.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Needs analysis for the whole teaching staff**

#### **PROGRAMME**

- 1 August. Identifying the problems or barriers to learning  
Strengths and weaknesses
8. August. Report back by teachers from observation of behavior and learning  
difficulties in the classroom.
15. August- Reading and literacy L. Lomofsky, M.Thabana Plan of action.
- 21 August- Classroom management. Brenda Sonn, TIP, UWC.  
(Questionnaires to be completed)(Focus group interviews to be arranged)
- 28.August- Community profiling.S.Lazarus, N.Matsie.Z, Jonas
- 4.September- No workshop research by school staff
- 11 September -Community profiling (continued)
- 18 September- Community profiling (process completed)  
Questionnaires and focus group interviews.



Needs analysis of the school.

- Absenteeism
- Late coming
- Neglect of homework
- Over age learners
- Discipline
- Peer pressure
- Substance abuse
- HIV/AIDS
- Crime
- Poverty and unemployment
- Pregnancies
- Low self esteem

Planning for workshop I: 18 / 07/ 2002.

Step 1. Teachers will identify the types of problems that can be seen.

Step 2. Teachers will mention the problems, which their children faced in the environment.

Step 3. Overview the type of difficulties that leads to learning breakdown and development

Step 4. Behavior observation task- observation of one child whose behavior worries the teacher

Step 5. Case study to identify the problem of the child

Process.


- Identify- think and write the problem in the class.
- Behavior observation
- Case study
- Intervention- barriers to learning and development (hand out for teachers ).



## APPENDIX E

Referral form provided by the lectures of U.W.C

**DESCRIBE WHAT THE CHILD DOES WELL (ASSETS) AND WHAT HE DOES NOT DO WELL (NEEDS)**

	<b>STRENGTHS (ASSETS)</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES (NEEDS)</b>
<b>A. Scholastic Subjects/learning area</b>		
<b>B. Behaviour or emotional factors.</b>		
<b>C. Other areas e.g. health and social factors.</b>		

## **APPENDIX F: workshop agenda**

### **Planning for workshop two. 06/08/02.**

Step 1. Behavior observation (report from teachers)

Step 2. Choose one behavior and problem solve. Action plan.

Step 3. Referral steps

Step 4. Group activity- discussion of possible solutions

### **Conclusion**

Introduction to Literacy and learning breakdown

### **Planning for workshop three. 08/08/02.**

Step 1. Introduction

Children who cannot read

1. Foundation Phase

### **Decoding skills**

- Phonics and sights words.

2. Senior Phase



### **Meaning / comprehension**

- Whole Language approach; make own sentences create own books.
- Word games
- Language games

Step 2. Teachers mention resources within the school and outside which they can use to help the learners who cannot read.

Step 3. Role of Teacher Support Team

## APPENDIX G

### Case studies

**Grade:** Three

**Name:** Nandipha

The Grade Three teacher asked for assistance from the T.S.T. concerning a child who is repeating the grade. She is over-age and she always laughs while the teacher is teaching. She doesn't concentrate in class. She cannot read and on some days she will cry. She always talks to others while teaching is in progress.

**Home:** She lives with her auntie. Her cousins beat her because they say that she does not belong to the family. There are emotional problems.

**Scholastic:** She cannot read and she struggles with the homework. She is often absent.

**Strengths:** She can sing and is a member of the school choir.



**GRADE:** FOUR

**NAME:** Dumisa

Mrs. T, a Grade Four teacher, is concerned about Dumisa, a 10-year old boy in her class. Mrs. T reports that Dumisa is very quiet and shy, and he doesn't even laugh at a joke. He lives with both parents and three siblings. His parents travel to the Transkei frequently, and leave Dumisa under the care of his siblings. Mrs. T identified him in February because he could not even write his name. Dumisa has a severe learning difficulty and might have inherited some form of disability from his family. Dumisa is not progressing in his studies, but he does perform better in practical activities. In class Dumisa can draw pictures and he knows Xhosa sounds but cannot form a word. He is slow to write, but he can copy from the board. He confuses sounds - instead of 'F' he will say 'V' or 'W' or 'U'. He is very quiet and he doesn't disturb other children. He is very responsible and performs duties such as closing the windows and keeping the teacher's desk clean.

## Appendix H

### Procedures and interventions. An overview of the process in the research.

Step	Aim	Activity
<b>One</b>	Negotiations with the school to clarify and negotiate the project	Meeting with the Educational Management Development Centre EMDC learning support facilitator, principal and members of the staff
<b>Two</b>	Identification of particular barriers to learning faced by the school	Needs analysis of the school and prioritisation of those needs
<b>Three</b>	To assist the teacher on how to identify the learning or behavioural problems experienced by the learners	Workshop One: How to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the child using the referral form. Teachers reported back on the cases that were difficult to handle in the classroom
<b>Four</b>	To assist the teachers in how to identify behavioural problems in the classroom	Workshop Two: Using the action plans for IEP, how to tally incidences of problematic behaviour under observation and the report back to the teaching staff. Strategies were discussed on how to solve the problems encountered
<b>Five</b>	To assist learners who cannot read in the class	Workshop Three: Literacy, Phonics, sight words and whole language approaches to teaching were demonstrated. Then participants discussed how to identify resources both within and outside the school that can be used for teaching literacy
<b>Six</b>	To assist teachers to teach children problem-solving skills and to make decisions using critical and creative thinking	Workshop Four: Cognitive strategies
<b>Seven</b>	To assist teachers how to handle the problems they face in the large classroom	Workshop Five: classroom management for discipline problems

The last two workshops were not included in the End evaluation questionnaires due to the time factor.

1 August 2002

**TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM WORKSHOP**

**Nolungile School**

**Time: 1.00 – 300 p.m**



1. Introductory activity. How to define a problem?  
“Before you can solve a problem you need to know what the problem is”. Lillian

Problem identification                      Nthama

2. Key barriers to learning and development Lillian  
Case study; determining learner’s strengths and Weaknesses



3. Explanation of behaviour observation. Moliehi  
Teachers to report-back at the next meeting

4. Dates for future meetings

Whole School

Teacher Support Team

Collaboration with Sivile School

Conclusion                      All



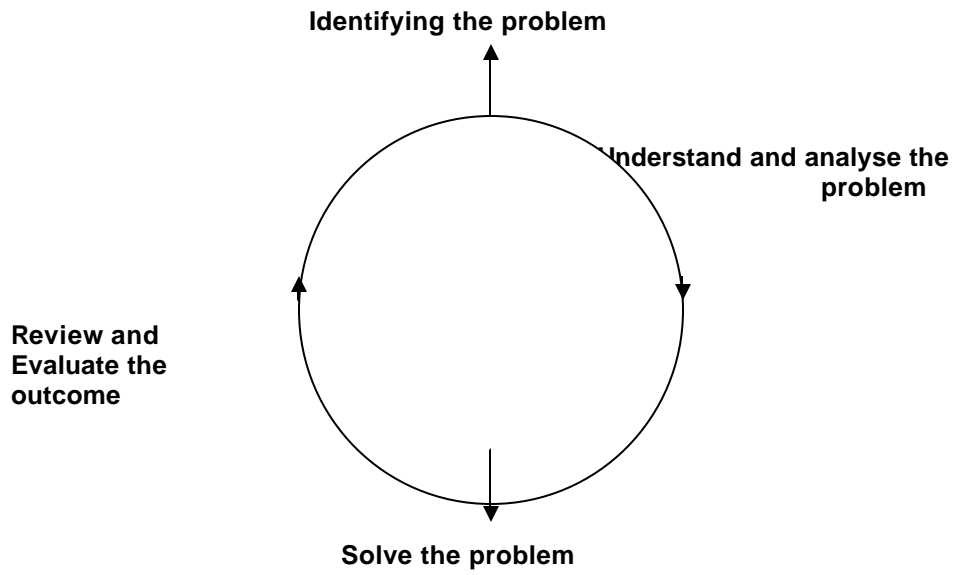
**8 August 2002**

**TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM WORKSHOP**

**NOLUNGILE SCHOOL  
TIME: 1.00 – 300 P.M.**

1. Making an action plan
2. How to refer?  
Referral steps
  - Identification of the barriers (strengths and weaknesses)
  - Identify the behaviour or learning difficulty
  - Behaviour observation
  - Teacher handles the problem in the class
  - Teacher refers to the committee
  - Committee makes recommendations
  - Referral to the TST
  - Class teacher and TST joint problem solving
3. Behaviour observation in class, report – back from teachers
4. Group activity – to discuss possible solutions
5. Introduction to Literacy and learning breakdown  
Discussion of strategies to address these barriers.
6. Conclusion; pointers for the next workshop

# Making an action plan



# Literacy and Reading

## 1. Introduction

There are many children who cannot read or their progress in reading is very slow. This is evident at all levels and grades in the school from Grade 1 to Grade 7. This barrier leads to learning breakdown.

Characteristics:

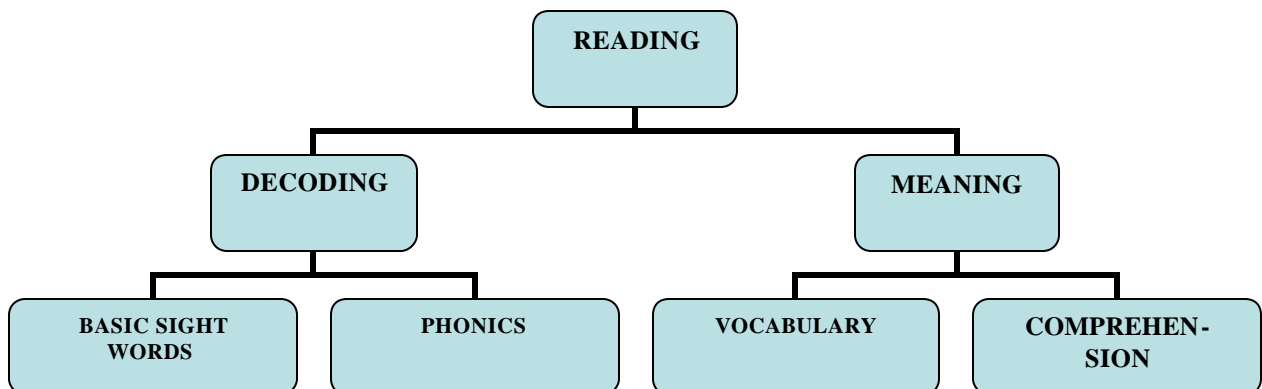
- Lack of phonological awareness
- Difficulty of recognizing words
- Slow and inaccurate reading
- Poor comprehension

## 2. There are **two important aspects to reading**

- ii) Decoding Skills
- iii) Reading for Meaning

i) **Decoding Skills** relies on the early introduction of sound symbol system by teaching Phonics

ii) **Reading for meaning** is making sense of the printed word and is referred to as comprehension. This is associated with whole language approaches to teaching reading.



**The different methods to teaching reading are:**

- Phonics – consonants, vowels, digraphs, syllabication etc.
- Sight words – high frequency or words from a theme or project
- Basal reading scheme – set of readers
- Language experience – creates and builds own sentences.
- Whole Language – listening, speaking, reading and writing

**Some approaches are:**

- **Group** – shared reading, cross-age tutoring, peer tutoring  
Concentrated Language encounter is an approach in which learners make their own reading books
- **Individualised reading** – Chooses a reader at own level and reads individually, paired reading at home or at school, peer tutoring (buddy system)
- **Dramatisation** of a story or dialogue between two people



**IDENTIFY THE RESOURCES YOU MAY USE:**

**IN THE SCHOOL**

**OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL**



## **THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM IN SUPPORTING READING**

- 1) FOUNDATION PHASE
- 2) INTERMEDIATE PHASE
- 3) SENIOR PHASE

### **Procedure:**

- Step one: Teacher identifies the barrier to reading and writing and tries to help the learner/s in the class
- Step two: Teacher discusses the learner/s with the other FP teachers
- Step four: PL prepares a learner Support Plan to implement in the class
- Step four: Referral to Teacher Support Team/Educator Support Team (TST/EST) who will make recommendations for an IEP/IEDP

### **ACTION PLAN**

#### **Long term and Short term goals for the following contexts**



- 1) The School
- 2) The Classroom
- 3) Home Programme