

**AN EXPLORATION OF LEARNERS' INTEGRATION
INTO THE MAINSTREAM: A CASE STUDY APPROACH**

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the
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Abstract

Inclusive education is an educational reform that has caused much debate and controversy amongst parents and policymakers alike. The inclusion model challenges one's thinking and action regarding learners with barriers to learning and requires us to go beyond integration where the learner has to adapt to the mainstream school setting when placed within it. Currently both integration and inclusion are practiced until inclusion becomes the norm. The integration of learners with physical barriers to learning was explored because aside from the physical disability their academic ability was commensurate for their age.

The aims of the study were to: (1) explore the education support services required by three learners who were integrated into the mainstream, (2) determine the level of support required by these learners to function maximally in the mainstream, (3) specifically explore the socio-emotional ability of these learners to adjust to the mainstream setting. Three cases were explored within an eco-systemic approach. Each case consisted of a learner with a physical disability, the learner's mother and the educator/s who first taught the learner at the mainstream school. Interviews were conducted with all of the participants and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was then conducted to extract themes from the transcriptions.

The findings suggest that even when a physical disability is severe it may not be a major barrier to learning. Successful inclusion for the learners should have focused on collaboration between the special and mainstream school, preparation of all involved and the assessment of each learner's socio-emotional ability to adjust to the mainstream setting. The level of support required by the learners should have focused on indirect support where the educators, parents and education system were addressed. The findings highlight the importance of incorporating learners, parents and educators in the inclusion process. The findings also emphasise the importance of the ecological systems approach in achieving successful inclusion

Key Words

Qualitative

Case study approach

Physical disability

Integration

Inclusion

Socio-emotional ability

Parental support

Educators' role

Learners' input

Ecological systems theory

Declaration

I declare that *An Exploration of Learner's Integration into the Mainstream: A Case Study Approach* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Janan Janine Dietrich

August 2008

Signed:

Dedication

To the learners, parents and educators who inspired me to conduct this research project. I hope that your voices will be heard so that further work is conducted to guarantee successful inclusion for those learners with barriers to learning, for whom inclusion is possible.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to study

The term disabled is used to describe individuals with real, persistent and individual differences and educational needs that until recently mainstream schools have been unable to accommodate (Terman, Lerner, Stevenson, & Berman, 1996). According to the United Nations (<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/facts.html> retrieved on 12 November 2007), more than half a billion people globally are disabled. About 80% of these persons with disabilities live in developing countries. Current South African census results (Statistics South Africa, 2005) show that 5% (2 255 982) of the total enumerated population of 44 819 778, in 2001, had various forms of disability. Census results are consistent with findings obtained by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) disability survey under the Department of Health (CASE, 1997), where it was estimated that 5.7 – 6.1% (2.3 – 2.5 million people) of the South African population live with disabilities. According to Statistics South Africa (2005), 3% of the total population with disabilities was between 10-19 years of age and 30% of the total had physical disabilities.

In light of the above statistics, many developing countries including South Africa have started to recognise the rights of people with disabilities. In an attempt to address inequalities of the apartheid regime the South African government formulated policies such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) and the Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS). These policies aimed to ensure that mechanisms were put in place at national level to guarantee that previously disadvantaged groups such as women, children and people with disabilities were empowered to function maximally in South African society (Statistics South Africa, 2005). Although minimal success has been achieved at the implementation level of the above-mentioned policies, there is indeed a commitment from government to facilitate empowerment of those with disabilities (CASE, 1997).

1.2 Background to study

In order to contextualise the study, a short history of the South African context is necessary. The inception of the South African democratic government in 1994 resulted in significant social, political and economic changes which saw dramatic changes in the South African education system (Asmal, 2000). There was a shift towards learning equity, which was couched in the discourse of human rights. The changes that occurred within the South African education system were aligned with international trends. An international conference regarding inclusive education was held in Spain in June 1994 where the Salamanca Statement was adopted (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca

Statement promotes: the fundamental right of all learners to education; the recognition of unique characteristics of every learner; the accommodation of diversity within education systems and programmes; and the accommodation of learners with barriers to learning within a learner-centred pedagogy that meets their needs (Kgare, 1999). Further, the proclamation advocates centres of learning within an inclusive orientation in order to reduce discriminatory attitudes and in effect build inclusive societies. The framework adopted at the conference thus provided guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education within South Africa.

The new South African government's commitment to the human rights of learners was informed by the Salamanca Statement. Legislation now mandates compulsory schooling to all learners until the age of 15 years (Republic of South African, 1996). In this thesis, a learner is defined as any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of the South African Schools Act No. 84 (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Furthermore, all public schools must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfair discrimination in any way.

The above legislation has implications for all learners including those with special needs. In accordance with evolving terminology, learners with special needs will be referred to as learners with barriers to learning. Barriers to learning are defined as difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or

within the learner which prevent both the system and the learner's needs from being met (Department of Education, 2005). Barriers to learning can be located within the learner, the centre of learning (for example, the school), the education system and the broader social, economic and political context (Department of Education, 2001). The South African government now recognises and is placing great emphasis on the right of all learners with barriers to learning to have access to an appropriate education (Kgare, 1999). The significance of the above legislative changes is remarkable when considered within the context of South Africa's apartheid history (Kgare, 1999).

Education White Paper 6 was formulated by the Minister of Education in consultation with the Council of Education Ministers to outline the framework for inclusive education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001). Input at this stage is highly valuable to inform policy at the implementation level. It is often the case that policies regarding education are conceptualised by policymakers. Policymakers are not necessarily the same people who facilitate implementation of these policies (Armstrong, 2003). Educators, parents and learners are the main stakeholders involved at the implementation level. The implementation of inclusion has to be informed by the aforementioned stakeholders. It is only then that their needs will be addressed (Engelbrecht, 1999; Gugushe, 1999; Mowes, 2002; Thomson et al., 2003). Various authors have argued that these significant role-players are in fact the ones who should directly be informing policy as they will have direct experience(s) of the implementation of the policies (Armstrong, 2003; Khan, 1998; Pivik, McComas & Laflamme, 2002;

Stough & Palmer, 2003; Voltz, Brazil & Ford, 2001). Much of the research conducted in South Africa in the area of inclusion has focused on educators' input (Abelman, 2001; Gugushe, 1999; Johnson, 2003; Kgare, 1999; Mowes, 2002; Nghipondoka, 2001). Very little research has been conducted on the contributions of parents and learners in the South African context and therefore research in this area is urgently needed. My motivation for conducting this study was to explore the experiences of learners who were integrated into the mainstream in order to afford parents, learners and educators the opportunity of providing input about their own experiences. The findings of this study will be presented to the Western Cape Department of Education and it is hoped that the findings will emphasise the importance of including parents and learners in the process of inclusion so that the principles of inclusion are truly maintained.

1.3 Motivation and rationale for study

This study will focus on the integration of learners with physical disabilities whose mobility may or may not be affected. For the purposes of this study, physical disability is defined as “a specific problem in body functioning (for example, paralysis of the legs)” (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002, p. 317). Physical disability may or may not affect mobility. According to Donald et al. (2002) mobility refers to the ability to move around. The degree to which mobility is affected differs according to the degree of the physical disability. Most learners with physical disabilities can benefit from being placed in the mainstream setting because their cognitive, social and emotional skills are generally like that of other children (Donald et al., 2002). It is therefore usually easier to

integrate academically able learners with physical disabilities into mainstream classes because they are academically equal to their age peers. Accommodations at the mainstream school will therefore focus on addressing the physical challenges the learner may have, by for instance building ramps (where the learner uses a wheelchair) or allowing the learner more time with written work where the learner's limbs are affected in some way.

The importance of learners' contributions in the evaluation of inclusion is widely recognised (Gersch, 2001; Jones, 2005; Norwich & Kelly, 2004; Pivik, McComas & Laflamme, 2002; Strong & Sandoval, 1999). According to Pivik et al. (2002), there is a lack of empirically based research that explores learners' experiences of the barriers to inclusion and full participation in mainstream school settings. Specific emphasis should be placed on the socio-emotional development of learners within the inclusion process as the basis of the inclusion model is to assist in the healthy development of whole, competent, and confident persons (Mowes, 2002).

1.4 Aims of the study

This study will broadly attempt to explore the education support services required by learners with physical disabilities, who were integrated into mainstream education. Education support services may include support from within the school, as well as to

other schools. Personnel who provide education support include psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists (Department of Education, 1997). Support may also include: the provision of assistive devices, nutritional programmes, social interventions, parent support, educator training and support, organisation development and curriculum development (Department of education, 1997). The main role-players that may potentially be the recipients of education support include the learner with barriers to learning, the learner's parent/s and the educator/s (at the mainstream school). It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide policy makers and those involved in the implementation of inclusion with insights into its practical implementation.

The specific aims of the study were:

- (1) To explore the education support services required by three learners who were integrated into the mainstream from a special school by:
 - (a) Considering the concerns of the learners themselves,
 - (b) Considering the concerns of the learners' parents, and
 - c) Considering the concerns of the learners' educator in the mainstream.

(2) To determine the level of support required by these learners to function maximally in the mainstream by collectively considering the concerns of the learner him/herself, his/her parent/s and his/her educator in the mainstream.

(3) To specifically explore the socio-emotional ability of these learners to adjust to the mainstream setting by:

(a) Considering the information obtained from the learners,

(b) Considering the information obtained from the learners' parents and

(c) Considering information obtained from the learners' educators in the mainstream.

1.5 Theoretical framework

Given the above aims, this study will be located within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. Systems theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the development of the child by considering the everyday environment, that is, the home, school and the neighbourhood within which the child grows up (Meyer, Loxton & Boulter, 1997). The ecological systems model builds on systems theory by identifying four interrelated systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. All of the aforementioned systems impact on the child who is the centre of the

ecological systems model. In addition, genetic and developmental history is critical to understanding the child's biological and psychological makeup. For effective inclusion one needs to be aware of the systems which impact on the learner as well as the biological and psychological makeup of the learner.

An important notion within ecological systems theory is that of ecological balance (Donald et al., 2002). The system is sustained if the relationships within the whole system are in balance. Although temporary changes in different sections of the system may occur, balance is usually restored in order to maintain the system as a whole. There may be situations where the recovery of the system as a whole is threatened so that the relationships and interdependence among the different sections is distorted. It is therefore critical that all of the systems which will impact on the inclusion of the learner in the mainstream setting be analysed so that an appropriate management plan is put in place to help the learner adjust successfully to the mainstream.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study has an important contribution to make to special schools that will facilitate the inclusion of their learners to mainstream schools. This thesis emphasises the importance of addressing inclusion from an ecological perspective by considering the

needs of all relevant stakeholders. Doing so will lead to successful inclusion of the learner and will achieve the ultimate aim of effective social inclusion in society.

1.7 Outline of chapters

Chapter One focuses on the motivation, problem formulation and aims of the study and also provides the background within which the study was conducted.

Chapter Two presents a thorough review of relevant literature so that the reader understands the context of the study.

Chapter Three provides a detailed account of the research methodology, data collection and analysis followed to achieve the research aims. Ethical measures and trustworthiness are also discussed.

Chapter Four presents the themes that emerged within each case and across the three cases under study. A discussion is included by integrating the results with previous research findings.

Chapter Five provides the reader with the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research and concludes the thesis.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present a thorough review of the literature that is necessary to understand the context of this study. It will present the various definitions in the literature related to inclusion, provide a summary of the history of inclusion internationally and locally, look at how adolescent development affects the inclusion process, review the socio-emotional aspects of the inclusion process and lastly describe the ecological systems theory that underpins the study.

2.2 Defining inclusion

Special education as it currently exists progressively moved towards the concept of inclusion. Wang and Reynolds (1996) report the history of inclusion as a positive transformation that began with total neglect of learners with barriers to learning, then moving to distal arrangements for a select few, progressing to local special schools and further progressing to special classes in mainstream schools. Further development saw a move towards resource rooms where learners spent some time but the remainder in the mainstream classroom and finally to where we are today - full inclusion. Learners with barriers to learning now have the option of being educated in mainstream schools and classrooms alongside their 'normal' functioning peers.

Even though the term inclusion is used universally, there is no agreed upon definition. According to Odom and Diamond (1998) the terms associated with the process of inclusion have changed. Although the term differs from context to context, there does seem to be a shared vision. This shared vision is to educate learners with barriers to learning in mainstream education classes rather than in segregated special education schools and/or classes (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999).

It may be useful to discuss some of the terms that emerged prior to that of inclusion. Terms such as *integration*, *mainstreaming*, *the regular education initiative (REI)*, *the least restrictive environment principle (LRE)* and *inclusion* are all terms that are used to describe the movement of learners into more integrated education settings (Wang & Reynolds, 1996).

Integration and *mainstreaming* are used synonymously. These terms have been, and still are, commonly used to refer to the placement of a learner with barriers to learning in the mainstream classroom (Donald et al., 2002). The term mainstreaming implies that the learner has to adjust to the system and his/her setting. Mainstreaming also resulted in learners being “pulled out” from the mainstream class to receive extra services in segregated settings. An example of this is a learner with mobility difficulties receiving physiotherapy in a room away from the classroom. Because mainstreaming is still practiced the term mainstream will be used to refer to all ordinary public schools.

Mainstreaming and *integration* are deeply rooted in the biomedical model. The biomedical model started to influence modern medicine from around the 1920s (Law & Dunn, 1993). The foundation of this model is the use of expert knowledge and technology to diagnose and cure. Expert knowledge is given by physicians and allied medical professionals. The medical model facilitates the exclusion of learners with barriers to learning from mainstream education and in effect from social and economic integration (Mowes, 2002). Within the medical model, the learner is expected to conform to the system within which he/she functions (Department of Education, 2001). The learner is given extra support so that he/she can 'fit in' or be integrated in the 'normal' classroom setting. Further, learners are assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, such as placements and intervention programmes. Within this model a learner with a disability was taught how to adapt to society by using the latest technological advances. Learners were and are still placed in segregated settings such as special schools and sheltered workshops.

The *Least Restrictive Environment* (LRE) is the education setting that provides the greatest exposure to mainstream education and to peers without disabilities (<http://www.inclusionhistory.htm> retrieved on 20 November 2007). The aim now is to expose learners with disabilities to the LRE.

The inclusion model moves away from the mainstream approach by rejecting any notion of segregation or separate placement of learners with barriers to learning (Murphy, 1996). The inclusion model challenges one's thinking and action regarding learners with barriers to learning (Skrtic, 1995). It requires us to go beyond mainstreaming where the learner has to adapt to the mainstream setting when placed within it. Inclusion forces us to be creative in our thinking so that we address the needs of learners with barriers to learning by making sure that the environment is attuned to their needs.

Inclusion is an educational reform that has caused a lot of controversy and debate since its introduction. According to Murphy (1996) inclusion is defined as the full integration of learners with barriers to learning into the educational settings such as schools and consequently classrooms, where they would have been placed assuming they had no barriers to learning. It has now become a universal right for all children to have access to an education regardless of their barriers to learning. Even the difficult to teach can not be denied an education that is beneficial (Wang & Reynolds, 1996).

Authors have distinguished between inclusion and full inclusion (Murphy, 1996). According to Murphy (1996), this distinction is based more on authors' personal preferences than on empirical evidence. Murphy (1996) defines inclusion as the total integration of all learners with barriers to learning – particularly those with disabilities, into age appropriate mainstream education in their communities regardless of the nature

or degree of the needs involved. Further, special education and education support services for these learners are provided within the mainstream education setting and almost always in the learner's classroom itself. Lipsky and Gartner (1994) define inclusion as the process whereby learners with barriers to learning learn with their peers in the mainstream classroom.

Social inclusion is critical to the process of academic inclusion. According to Murphy (1996), there are many supporters of inclusion who agree that there are positive socio-emotional benefits for both learners with and without barriers to learning. In fact it is the integration into society that has underpinned the motivation for inclusion. Yet this aspect of inclusion is often overlooked in favour of curriculum aims (Nabuzoka, 2000). As a result, most of the dialogue and debates around inclusion have focused on the effectiveness of matters such as educational organisation, educational method and attitudes (Engelbrecht, 1999). Although the ultimate aim of academic inclusion is that of social inclusion of learners with differing barriers to learning, it is an aspect that is often neglected by policymakers and professionals within the education system.

Regardless of all the terms used to describe the process of inclusion, it is clear that a universal commitment to the process has begun. This commitment is that of ensuring the right of education for all. The challenge now is ensuring that inclusion does in fact happen in practice for all children with barriers to learning.

2.3 The history of inclusion: Internationally

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations Organisation, 1948) includes the right of everyone to education.

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”

(Article, 26, p. 6).

Internationally, nations such as Canada and the United States have promoted full participation and integration of children with disabilities into society for over 25 years (Pivik et al., 2002). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 facilitated the reform of special education in the United States of America (Wang & Reynolds, 1996). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1975 cited in Strong & Sandoval, 1999) mandates that all American children with disabilities receive as much of their education as possible in mainstream education settings and via the regular curriculum.

The IDEA was amended in 1997

(http://www.otal.umd.edu/~paulette/ISTC201_Fall2000/wildcats/inclusionhistory.html

on the 13 November 2007) and states the following:

“Each State must establish procedures to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities ... are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special education, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” [20 U.S.C. 1412(5)(B)].

The amendments mandate that all states in the United States of America must put procedures in place so that all learners with disabilities have access to education in the most Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). As previously mentioned, the Least Restrictive Environment is the education setting that provides the greatest exposure to mainstream education and to peers without disabilities. Segregated settings such as special schools or separate schooling should only be considered if placement in the mainstream school will *not* achieve satisfactory results. It is important to have this option available as not all children with barriers to learning can benefit from mainstream schooling.

British educational reform was informed by the 1978 Warnock Report and subsequently by the 1981 Education Act (Struthers, 2005). The term “children with special educational needs” was coined and learners with special needs were then allowed to attend mainstream schools alongside their peers.

Other developed countries such as Ireland, France, Australia and New Zealand followed the trend of educational reform by recognising that learners with barriers to learning should be educated at a mainstream school, where practically possible (Struthers, 2005). This had an impact on the less developed countries like South Africa, which started to recognise that barriers to learning could be addressed in mainstream schools.

Despite the international commitment to facilitate social change, the health system remains the main institution to service individuals with disabilities. The inclusion framework therefore continues to be influenced by the biomedical model. Doctors continue to diagnose medical barriers to learning and their expert knowledge continues to be highly regarded. In light of this, Law and Dunn (1993) propose an ecological perspective in order to ensure that inclusive practices are indeed implemented. Doing so should start with the acknowledgement that barriers to learning are caused by the interactions of a child with his/her environment. Barriers to learning and specifically disability must be seen as a societal problem where the barriers are caused by the environments within which we live. According to Law and Dunn (1993), social policy

would then be the logical means to minimise barriers in order to increase children's participation.

The education sector acknowledges that inclusion will only succeed if it is dealt with from a multi-sectoral approach (Struthers, 2005) in which there is liaison between education, health, social policy, urban planning and social services (Ahuja, 2000 cited in Struthers, 2005). The multi-sectoral approach particularly helps in the many situations where inclusion fails or is not adequately addressed. The reader will notice that the researcher uses the term inclusion throughout the thesis but the learners who participated are regarded as integrated into the mainstream. The researcher does this because an inclusive approach was not taken when placing the learners in mainstream schools. The principle of integration was applied in the education system at the time of their placement. This will become more apparent as the reader progresses through the thesis.

Inclusion in practice poses many challenges that cut across all levels from the individual to the international policies that guide the process. However, the advantages of inclusive practices will result in a society that regards all citizens as important and equal regardless of their barriers. A major advantage is that children who were previously denied an education alongside their peers now have the right and opportunity to be part of the educational settings afforded to their peers. Problems will be shifted from the individual so that they are directed and resolved at a societal level.

2.4 The South African context

As a result of the inequalities that existed for children in the South African education department, particularly those with disabilities, ‘special’ education as it existed in the past is in the process of being transformed to exist within the current inclusive education model (Department of Education, 2001). One of the first steps towards this change was the adoption of a philosophy of one education system that is aimed towards achieving equity, access and redress by providing quality education for all (Kgare, 1999). Then there was a shift away from the medical model where learners with ‘special needs’ were labelled according to their disability and emphasis was placed on pathology. Currently, integration and inclusion is practiced within schools with the ultimate aim that the concept of inclusion will become a common practice. Emphasis is now placed on social and/or other systemic factors that possibly influence or cause the barriers to learning.

In 1996, the South African government mandated that the provincial authority “must where reasonably practicable, provide education for learners with special needs at ordinary public schools and provide the relevant educational support for such learners” (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 10). In terms of the South African Schools Act No.84 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) a public school may be an ordinary public school or a public school for learners with special education needs (Section 12(3)). The local ordinary school would be the school closest to where the learner lives (Department

of Education, 2005). For the purpose of this thesis the term mainstream school will be used to refer to the local ordinary or public school.

According to the Department of Education (2001) inclusion recognises and respects the differences among learners. Inclusion focuses on supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the focus is on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs. The school environment is viewed as the learner's context and it is this context that needs to be addressed to ensure that their needs are met. The inclusive education model therefore addresses barriers to learning and exclusion by being learner-centred.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "inclusion" will be used as outlined below by the South African education department.

The Department of Education (2001) defines inclusive education and training as:

- a) Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.

- b) Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.

- c) Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases.
- d) Broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within informal settings and structures.
- e) Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners.
- f) Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning.
- g) Empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning and development.

The above mentioned definition shows that inclusive education in the South African context is underpinned by a broad philosophical and principled position whose intention is to facilitate the same educational rights to all children. The South African Bill of Rights informs the inclusive education model which protects all children from discrimination regardless of their race, gender, social class, language, religion or ability. Further, it commits the government and subsequently the education departments within South Africa to ensure that all children are given access to education that is appropriate

to their needs irrespective of their origin, background or circumstances (Donald et al., 2002).

In the future, special schools will change to resource centres where service delivery will be broadened to include mainstream schools (Department of Education, 2001). Educators and education support staff at the resource centres will not only have to service the learners at the centre but also those at mainstream schools. The department of education employed various task teams to investigate the practical implementation of the guidelines outlined in Education White Paper 6. The issue of support is one of the areas that are currently being addressed. The fundamental aim will be to maximise support services in the mainstream school so that learners with barriers to learning can be included, successfully. In order to attain this goal, support will have to be provided to the system within which the child functions. The shift towards a social model of support is therefore highlighted. The focus is no longer on the learners' impairments and on an attempt to change the learner but on the support needed by the educator, the broader classroom and school, and the family and community (Department of Education, 2001).

2.5 The role of educators

Educators at the mainstream schools, who will service learners from special schools, are pivotal in the inclusion process (Ainscow, 1997; Gugushe, 1999; Thomson et al., 2003).

Stough and Douglas (2003) conducted a qualitative exploration into the skills needed for educator effectiveness within the inclusive education framework. Their findings showed that an effective inclusive education framework is dependent on educators who are highly knowledgeable regarding learners with special needs. Research has shown that effective special education educators process information on learners with disabilities differently to mainstream educators (Bartelheim & Evans, 1993; Billingsley & Tomchin, 1992 in Stough & Douglas, 2003). It is argued that educators in special education are more likely to assess their learners' academic and emotional states of mind so effectively that they are able to address their learners' needs. Educators who teach at special education schools will therefore become pivotal in assisting mainstream education educators to teach learners with barriers to learning in the mainstream classroom.

Authors purport another critical element of inclusion, that is, the collaboration between special and mainstream education educators (Gugushe, 1999; Strong & Sandoval, 1999; Voltz et al., 2001). Collaboration can foster a working relationship between special and mainstream education educators enabling them to problem-solve the effective inclusion of learners within the mainstream.

A significant factor highlighted by findings of Strong and Sandoval (1999, p. 360) was that: "All children have unique needs as well as common needs, and each child may need modified instruction at some level, regardless of whether he or she had a disability

or not.” Educators acknowledged that the process of ensuring inclusive practices facilitates educators’ recognition that accommodations in teaching may have to be made for many learners in the mainstream classroom, regardless of whether they have a disability or not.

2.6 Parent Support

Parental support and links with the referral school was identified as crucial in the inclusion process (Abelman, 2001; Macleod, 2001; Mowes, 2002; Priestley & Rabiee, 2002). Research conducted by Abelman (2001), Cheminais (2001) and Gugushe (1999), emphasised the importance of parental involvement in planning, policy-making and the provision of support to learners with barriers to learning. It is argued that the learner’s progress will be impeded if parents are not actively involved in the inclusion of their child in the mainstream (Engelbrecht et al., 2005; Strong & Sandoval, 1999).

A large scale investigation was conducted by Palmer, Fuller, Arora and Nelson (2001) to explore parental views regarding inclusion. One hundred and forty parents of children with severe disabilities who were in a special school at that time were asked to provide reasons for and against the practice of inclusion. Analysis of the findings showed that a parent’s decision to place his/her child in a mainstream classroom was dependent on a number of factors. These factors extended beyond the child’s condition of severity.

However where children had more severe conditions, parents were more likely to want their children placed at a special school. Parents were more likely to support mainstream placement if they felt that their child would benefit from having higher academic expectations or was in need of a more stimulating environment. Some of the parents also felt that learners in the mainstream could benefit from having learners with disabilities in their classroom. An important observation made by the researchers was that parents who opposed special schooling were afraid that the social well being of their children would be affected negatively. They feared that peers in the mainstream would reject and isolate their children. This finding is particularly significant when one considers that the aim of inclusion is social integration.

A study conducted by Pivik et al. (2002) explored whether special education efforts had in fact met the needs of learners with disabilities. Focus groups were conducted with learners who had mobility disabilities and their parents. Parents and learners identified four categories of barriers at their schools: (1) the physical environment, (2) intentional attitudinal barriers, (3) unintentional attitudinal barriers and (4) physical limitations. Attitudes of those in society, environmental limitations and physical limitations all contribute to the success of inclusion.

Priestley and Rabiee (2002) reviewed the findings of two pilot projects where disabled learners were moved from special schools into the mainstream. The views and experiences of all stakeholders were investigated. The stakeholders included learners,

parents, support staff, health professionals, educators and senior managers. The findings showed that all of the stakeholders supported the inclusion process. The stakeholders had significantly different views in terms of areas of importance and in terms of their concerns. The learners valued the experience of going to mainstream settings because they were able to interact with more children that they could play with in the mainstream settings. The primary school learners had more opportunities to interact with other children in the mainstream than they did in the special school. The high school learners had more difficulty interacting with peers because they had limited opportunities to meet with other learners during breaks. Learners who had a sibling at the school or who knew someone at the school had opportunities to meet other learners. Staff within special schools highlighted that inclusion should not be based on specific impairments, because it will result in learners with more complex disabilities being kept at the special schools.

Priestley and Rabiee (2002) pointed out two areas of inclusion that were identified by parents, that is, academic and social inclusion. According to their literature review they found that parents supported the idea of social inclusion for their children but were more hesitant of academic inclusion. Priestley and Rabiee (2002) found that parents had concerns regarding support for their children at the mainstream in terms of bullying, continuity, accessibility, flexibility, transport and acceptance of their children by peers in the mainstream.

2.7 The importance of learners' views

It is becoming increasingly acceptable and necessary to listen to the views of children, particularly those with disabilities (Jones, 2005; Strong & Sandoval, 1999). According to Jones (2005) the disability movement now places great emphasis on obtaining the views of children in relation to the development of appropriate inclusive services that incorporate their needs and views.

Pivik et al. (2002) emphasised the importance of collecting data regarding inclusion with those affected the most, that is, the learners with barriers to learning. They state that these learners are fully capable of asserting and expressing their views and experiences. It is therefore critical that we acknowledge that inclusion, for the most part, impacts on the learners with the disabilities the most. For this reason it has become critical for us to consider their views in this area. The importance of learners' contributions in the evaluation of inclusion has therefore become widely recognised (Gersch, 2001; Pivik et al., 2002). According to Pivik et al. (2002) there is a lack of empirically based research that explores learners' experiences of the barriers to inclusion and full participation in mainstream school settings.

A study conducted by Voltz et al. (2001) found that the physical environment in the placement of learners with physical disabilities was often emphasised while other

aspects of inclusion were neglected. Furthermore, there was little support provided to facilitate collaboration between mainstream and special education educators in order to ensure effective inclusion of the learner with barriers to learning.

Voltz et al. (2001) suggest that we should go beyond focusing on the physical environment of learners with physical barriers to learning. They suggest that we need to question whether a learner's needs are being addressed within an inclusive classroom by addressing specific aspects. These aspects include the level of engagement between the learners with barriers to learning and their non-disabled peers; the productive participation of the learner with barriers to learning in classroom learning activities; the frequency and nature of interaction with peers as well as establish who the initiator of the interaction is; and the nature of the educator's interaction with the learner by finding out if the quality and quantity of the interaction is the same with all learners.

A study conducted by Strong and Sandoval (1999) explored the mainstreaming of learners with neuromuscular disease. They conducted focus groups with educators, learners and parents of learners with neuromuscular disease in order to collect information about coping issues and educator attitudes towards the education of learners with neuromuscular disease. Qualitative analysis of the data showed three main emergent themes: (a) a need for better communication between the home and school, (b)

a need to establish a sense of competence on the part of the children and (c) a need for improved peer relationships.

Jones (2005) conducted pioneering research in obtaining children's views by facilitating children between the ages of 6-14 to talk about inclusion. A picture booklet with questions was designed so that children would talk about inclusion. There was an overwhelming response from the children to be included in daily activities. Children were aware that they needed social, personal and interpersonal skills in order for them to interact in inclusive settings. According to Jones (2005), further analysis of the findings showed there was a need amongst the children to undergo disability equality training. Disability equality training was necessary to facilitate understanding of disability as well as to inform them that all children with disabilities had abilities and strengths. In addition children pointed out that inclusive activity should be managed by an adult who was skilled and sensitive. Emphasis was placed on the personal involvement of this adult in order to facilitate successful inclusive services.

2.8 Developmental Stage

The learners who participated in this study are characterised as adolescents. One of the learners was 13 years of age while the other two were 14 years of age at the time of data collection. For specificity purposes, one can say that they are in the stage of early

adolescence. The United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) define adolescence as the period between 10-19 years (<http://www.un.org.in./Jinit/who.pdf> retrieved on the 27 August 2008).

According to Eccles (1999) adolescence is a time of critical developmental changes that establish children's sense of identity. It is a time in each individual's life during which personal, familial and social transitions occur (Laubscher & Klinger, 1997). During early adolescence there are many changes that children experience. There is usually great emotional upheaval that happens because of hormonal changes and conflicts to identity autonomy (Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 1996). These changes include biological and cognitive changes which impact on social roles and relationships. A supportive home environment will facilitate the ability for children to discuss their difficulties with parents and/or siblings so that emotional upheaval is minimised.

The learner moving from a special to a mainstream school is faced with the reality of a changing body and mind as he/she is placed in a different academic and social environment. Eccles (1999) asserts that environments that do not match the needs of the child during adolescence can result in failing confidence and negative behaviour patterns. The inclusion process should therefore be attuned to the needs of the learner moving to the mainstream environment for the process to be a success. Communication between all involved would appear to be the logical step to ensure successful inclusion

of a learner. So, the learner, parent(s) and educators (from mainstream and special schools) should liaise prior to placement to ensure that the learner's needs are met. In this way the environment can be adjusted to suit the learner. The learner should not have to adjust to the environment, as is the situation with mainstreaming and integration.

Another important consideration is that learners with physical disabilities may be conscious and sensitive about their physical 'difference' (Donald et al., 2002; Wright, 1983). This means they may be like other children in terms of cognitive, social and emotional development but their physical difference(s) may make them feel different to other children. Learners with physical disabilities who have 'normal' cognitive, social and emotional functioning can be well accommodated in the mainstream classroom provided that their physical needs are met. So besides being different physically, a child with a physical disability will also face barriers in his/her environment that may limit his/her active participation in normal daily activities.

2.9 Socio-emotional development

Specific emphasis should be placed on the socio-emotional development of learners within the inclusion process given that the basis of the inclusion model is to assist in the healthy development of whole, competent, and confident persons (Mowes, 2002). In order to create this change, an understanding of the socio-emotional development of learners is imperative. In this study, the socio-emotional ability of the learner is defined

as the ability to understand, manage and express the social and emotional aspects of his/her life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks, such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development (Elias et al., 1997).

Understanding human development is critical to understanding how each learner copes in terms of his/her socio-emotional ability when moved to the mainstream environment. Each of the learners has different genetic makeup, backgrounds and different family backgrounds which will impact on how they adjust to the mainstream. Although many theorists within the field of psychology have contributed to the field of socio-emotional development, emphasis will be placed on Erikson's psycho-social theory of development. Erikson integrated psycho-analytic theory, social insights and took into account that people play an active role in their development. Erikson defines eight stages of psycho-social development during one's lifetime (Donald et al., 2002). These eight stages relates to one's emerging emotional needs and the interaction with expanding social relationships. The eight stages are as follows: (1) trust versus mistrust (infancy), (2) autonomy versus trust and doubt (toddler – about two to three years), (3) initiative versus guilt (early childhood), (4) industry versus inferiority (middle to late childhood), (5) identity versus role confusion (adolescence), (6) intimacy versus isolation (young adulthood), (7) generativity versus stagnation (middle adulthood) and (8) integrity versus despair (late adulthood). According to Erikson, each stage presents a challenge or developmental tension between two opposites. This he refers to as a

psychosocial crisis. Erikson predicts specific psychosocial crises in all of the eight stages. These stages are sequential, meaning that the way in which a crisis is resolved in one stage may have a positive or negative effect on subsequent developmental changes.

For the purposes of this study emphasis will be placed on stage five, the period of adolescence characterised by identity versus role confusion. During this stage of psychosocial development, the adolescent has to come to terms with who he/she is and where he/she is going (Donald et al., 2002). As mentioned previously, adolescence is associated with biological and hormonal changes. In addition, there is the move away from parental constraints to forming peer relationships. In order to do this, children need to establish their own role and place in the world. According to Donald et al. (2002) this search for identity is closely linked to establishing special interests and competencies, orientations to the world of work, sexual identity, self image and lasting friendships. So, the search for identity becomes an individual as well as a public issue. Donald et al., (2002) attribute the search for the individual identity to find out 'who I am' and the public sense of identity by determining how 'others see me' (p. 78). The challenge is then to balance the two by integrating experiences of certainty and confusion. Resolution of this stage will result in the adolescent emerging with a relative sense of integrity and faith in him/herself.

In order to gain a greater understanding of adolescent involvement it is necessary to focus on the development of friendships and peer relationships. Children's friendships provide an excellent base to evaluate scholastic achievement and socio-emotional distress (Doll, 1996) because having friends and being friends are defining moments in childhood. Heller and Swindle (1983) as well as Ladd and Oden (1979) purport that having friends can act as a buffer during times of emotional distress by making it easier for children to ask for assistance. Doll (1996) distinguishes between friendship and peer acceptance. Peer acceptance, is defined as the degree to which members of a group like a child and want to spend time with him/her (Doll, 1996). Friendship on the other hand occurs when children choose and are simultaneously chosen by others as a preferred friend. Dodge (1989) found that when children had friends, the friendship had an immediate effect on their well-being. Further research showed that having just one friend in class contributed positively to the child's sense of wellbeing if he/she was feeling lonely.

In summary it can be asserted that peer acceptance and friendships will have a critical influence on an adolescent's adjustment to the mainstream education setting.

2.10 Theoretical framework

Ecological systems theory evolved from the combining of the ecological and systems theories. “Ecological systems theory is based on the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment” (Donald et al., 2002, p. 45). In this study, there is interdependence between people and their environments where interdependence refers to the relationship between two or more people who need each other to survive physically and socially. The relationships are seen as a whole so that every part is as critical to the next in sustaining the whole system.

This research will locate itself within Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory. Ecological systems theory consists of four interrelated systems (Odom & Diamond, 1998). These systems are: the child’s immediate physical and social environment (the microsystem); the interactions among the systems within this environment (the mesosystem); broader social, political and economic conditions (the exosystem) and general beliefs, attitudes and ideologies shared by members of a society (the macrosystem) (Meyer et al., 1997).

The child’s biological and psychological makeup (genetic and developmental history) forms the basis of this model (Donald et al., 2002). Then there are process factors, such as the types of interactions that occur at school. Context also forms an important

component in the theory. There is the family context, the school context and the local community. Time also needs to be considered as a child will experience many changes within him/self and within his/her environment. Ecological systems theory is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it emphasises the impact of the environment on the child's development. It allows one to make sense of a learner within his/her context (Thomson et al., 2003) by exploring the interrelationships between the different systems that impact on the child's development. According to Meyer et al. (1997) the use of this theory allows for the accountability of the developing child in South Africa with regard to the range of systems that impact on him/her. The learner's integration into the mainstream can be understood through the different systems that impact on him/her.

The *microsystem* will consist of systems that the child will interact with closely particularly daily activities, roles and relationships (Donald et al. 2002). In this study a learner's microsystem will include the home and the classroom.

The *mesosystem* is a set of microsystems that interact with one another (Donald et al., 2002). In this case, the interaction will be between the home and the classroom. One can then assume that what happens at home will affect the classroom and vice-versa.

The *exosystem* includes other systems which the learner may not be directly involved with but which may influence or be influenced by the people with whom the learner has close relationships in the microsystems. For example, an educator is mandated by the rules and regulations of the provincial education department. Following this example, the provincial education department becomes an exosystem that impacts on the child but with whom the learner does not necessarily have direct contact.

The *macrosystem* refers to dominant social structures such as beliefs and values that influence and may be influenced by all other levels of the whole system (Donald et al., 2002). In this case a macrosystem will be the Bill of Rights and the National Inclusion Framework that guides the education of learners with barriers to learning in South Africa. This level affects all the levels of the system. As a consequence of the government's commitment to education for all, learners with barriers to learning can now be placed in the mainstream setting. All of the learners in the study were transferred to the mainstream from a special school. This impacted on their families as well as their classroom setting at the mainstream school.

All of the above systems will impact on the learner in a way that will result in ecological balance or discord. The aim of the inclusion process is to ensure balance within and between the different systems. Striking such a balance will imply that the learner's needs are being addressed in his/her context.

2.11 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter defined the terms related to inclusion and the history of inclusion at an international and local level. The role of educators, parents and learners input was discussed. In addition, adolescence was discussed in terms of how it affects psycho-social development with particular reference to socio-emotional development. Lastly, an in-depth explanation of the theoretical framework was provided.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the research was conducted by outlining the research design, participant selection, procedures followed and the data collection techniques. Data analysis, ethical considerations and ensuring credibility of the study are also included.

3.2 Research design

The research was located within a qualitative framework. According to Devers and Frankel (2000) qualitative research is best characterised as a family of approaches whose goal is to understand the lived experience of persons who share time, space and culture. The basis of qualitative research is the relationship between language and the world it seeks to describe (Devers & Frankel, 2000). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.8): “Qualitative research implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (it measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, of frequency.” Qualitative researchers place great emphasis on the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational parameters that shape the inquiry. The aim is to find out *how* social experience is created and given

meaning. A qualitative framework was therefore used as a means of obtaining in-depth information from participants regarding their lived experiences of inclusion.

In order to gain in-depth information regarding inclusion, the case study methodology was selected. Case study methodology consists of an in-depth understanding of a case employing a variety of methods to investigate a phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), case study research is particularly useful within education as it may contribute towards the 'democratisation' of knowledge and hence decision-making. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) assert that case studies have provided some of the most useful methods available to conduct educational research. In addition, it allows the reader to judge the implications of the study for him/herself so that he/she is then able to determine whether the case can be applied to his/her setting (Cohen, et al., 2000).

A 'case' can be defined as a bounded system such as a child, a clique, a community, a class or school (Cohen, et al., 2000). A case can consist of a single bounded system or a collective of systems, known as a collective case study. A collective case study is usually chosen to show different perspectives of a problem (Cresswell, 1998). No more than three cases were selected because Cresswell (1998) recommends that no more than four cases be chosen in a collective case study. He states that having more than one case may result in a loss of depth and as such, he warns that there be no more than four

cases. In this study, learners with physical disabilities were explored. Three cases were selected to show how unique each individual's integration into the mainstream is and to demonstrate a physical disability from different perspectives. Each case consisted of a learner, his/her mother and his/her educator at the mainstream school.

Based on the above assertions case study methodology was utilised within a qualitative framework in order to gain an in-depth understanding of three cases. A case study approach was particularly appropriate because the challenges relating to inclusion could be explored in order to facilitate understanding which in turn has the potential to improve the practical implementation of inclusion.

3.3 Participants

Each case consisted of three participants - the learner, one parent and an educator. Initially nine participants were selected. However, eleven interviews were eventually conducted. One of the learners had moved to a mainstream school for a week. She had not felt comfortable at this school. Her mother then moved her to another mainstream school in the area. It was therefore of great significance to interview the educators she had been exposed to at both the first and second school. The learners as well as their mothers were selected from a "coloured" community in the Western Cape. Two females and one male learner who were integrated into the mainstream from a special school

were selected. All of the mothers were single parents. Fathers were not invited to participate because two of the fathers had no contact with their children while one father was involved to some extent.

Purposive sampling was utilised to select the learners for this study. Purposive sample is a useful sampling strategy to employ when participants are selected based on the researcher's knowledge of a population, the elements under study, and the nature of the research aims (Babbie et al., 2001). "In short it is based on your judgment and the purpose of your study" (Babbie et al., 2001, p. 166). All of the three learners were selected because they have a physical disability to a lesser or greater degree and because they attended a special school at the start of their education, that is nursery school. Placement at a mainstream school was recommended because of above average academic performance at the special school. The learners' ages ranged from 13 to 14 years and all of them were transferred to a mainstream school at the start of or during the intermediate phase of their primary school education.

3.4 Data collection tools

Data collection methods included the following:

3.4.1 Documents

All relevant background information regarding each learner was obtained from the special school. Information included a brief case history, reasons for placement at a special school, therapy and/or medical services received, progress at the special school and the reason(s) for integration into the mainstream. Educators at the special school were consulted where necessary to provide further input. Parents were consulted regarding information that could be included in the thesis.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

A short questionnaire was given to the educators to obtain biographical information, such as gender, race, age, years of teaching experience and experience related to special education. This information was useful for the data analysis.

3.4.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with learners, parents and educators to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences of the inclusion process. All of the

participants were specifically interviewed to explore the support services required for maximal inclusion, to establish the level of support required and to explore the socio-emotional ability of the learner in order to adapt to the mainstream environment.

Interview durations ranged between 20 and 45 minutes. The interviews were all conducted in English as all of the participants felt comfortable with the language. Although not all of the learners' parents were first language speakers of English, the learners were all schooled in English.

Parental interviews were conducted at the convenience of the parents. All of the parent interviews were conducted at their homes. Two of the learners were interviewed at their homes prior to the interview with their mothers while one of the learners was interviewed at school. A quiet room where the learner and educator could be interviewed separately was arranged in advance. All of the interviews were recorded via audiotapes and transcribed verbatim.

3.4.4 Procedures

A proposal was submitted to the Western Cape Education department to receive permission to conduct the proposed study. A list of learners who were transferred to the

mainstream was requested from the school psychologist and physiotherapists at the special school. The researcher subsequently requested permission from the principal at the special school to gain access to the learners' school records. The parents were aware that the researcher would be accessing their school records and consented to this process. The learners' records could only be accessed at school. Files could not leave the school property and photocopies of information were not allowed.

The parents were contacted to inform them of the proposed study and to obtain permission for their and their childrens' participation in the study. In two of the cases the learners were spoken to first. The researcher was thus able to inform them of study aims and to obtain their verbal consent. The researcher then spoke to their parents who gave verbal permission for the interviews with the children. Written consent was obtained prior to all of interviews.

Four educators were interviewed, three females and one male. Two of the educators were contacted telephonically. Two of the educators were approached at their schools because the researcher struggled to contact them telephonically. All of the educators were keen to participate in the study as they regarded participation as a means of helping learners who had moved to the mainstream. All of the educators were interviewed during school time with the permission of the school principals.

3.5 Recording of the data

A variety of methods were used to record the qualitative data. These methods will be explained below.

3.5.1 Audio-recording

The interviews with all of the participants were audio recorded to obtain an accurate record of what was said.

3.5.2 Note-taking

During the interviews the interviewer took occasional notes to make a note of something that needed to be checked out, or as a reminder where probing was needed.

3.5.3 Reflective journal

Immediately after the interviews I reflected on what had taken place in the course of the interview (Patton, 1987). Reflections focused on the interview process, how the participants had opened up during the course of the interview and difficulties that had arisen.

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Interviews – thematic analysis

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim for qualitative analysis. Relevant units of the raw data was organised into conceptual categories so that themes or codes could be created for the data analysis. According to Neuman (2000), coding allows one to retrieve parts of data by reducing raw data into manageable chunks. Patton (1990) suggests that inductive analysis techniques can be used to categorise recurrent themes. Coding was guided by the research aims and allowed for the emergence of themes not considered by the researcher.

Data for the cases was analysed in two ways. Firstly, the themes that emerged within each case was analysed by doing a within-case analysis. Within-case analysis is recommended when multiple cases are presented (Cresswell, 1998). Secondly, common themes that emerged across the three cases were identified. Cresswell (1998) recommends an across-case analysis when there is more than one case. The results of the study will be presented in the next chapter by presenting a within-case analysis for each case and secondly via an across case analysis.

3.6.2 Documents – subjective analysis

Information obtained from the document search was used to establish if learners were still able to maintain the same academic progress from the special school to the

mainstream setting. Where academic progress was not consistent following integration the cause/s were explored so that the appropriate support could be recommended to ensure that the learner functioned maximally within the mainstream environment.

3.7 Ethics

Signed informed consent was obtained from all the participants, including the learners.

Informed consent implies that the participants were informed of the research aims, methodology and the way in which it is hoped the findings would be utilised. The ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at all times.

Pseudonyms were used to refer to participants and the participating schools. At no point in this thesis were actual names used. Participants had the right to withdraw from the research process at any stage. All of the participants willingly gave of their time and input. The parents and teachers in particular, were keen to contribute to research relating to inclusion

3.8 Credibility of the study

In the qualitative framework of research, quantitative issues such as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity can never be realised completely (Babbie et al., 2001). Babbie et al. (2001) suggest that qualitative researchers be concerned with the notion of trustworthiness. By ensuring that a study meets the requirement of

trustworthiness the researcher is ensuring that the inquiry has credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These concepts will be explained below.

Credibility of the study should be assured throughout the research process from start to finish. According to Pitney (2004) credibility establishes whether research findings capture what transpires in a specific context and whether the researcher learnt what he/she intended to learn. Chiovitti and Piran (2003) suggest ways of maintaining credibility. These include: using participants' actual words in the final document, addressing the researcher's personal views and insights about the phenomenon explored and allowing participants the opportunity to ensure that data and interpretations accurately capture their views and opinions. Multiple sources of data collection are recommended when a case study approach is used (Babbie et al., 2000).

The researcher attempted to maintain credibility of the research by including the participants' actual words in the results section. Participants were presented with the final results section to provide them the opportunity to make sure that the researcher had in fact captured the data appropriately. Changes were made where necessary.

Transferability is the extent to which the results of a study can be applied outside of the context of the study and/or with other participants (Babbie et al., 2000). Although the endpoint of qualitative research is not to generalize, researchers should still strive towards achieving transferability. According to Babbie et al. (2000) this can be achieved through: a) thick description (enough data that is described within context and is reported with detail and precision), and b) purposive sampling (maximizing the range of information that can be secured about a specific context from different locations and members).

Dependability implies that the same or similar results would be obtained if the study were to be repeated with the same or similar participants (Babbie et al., 2000). There is acknowledgement that the same results may not be achieved with qualitative research because contexts may change with time. Therefore the same respondents at a different time will never be in the same context. A method employed to ensure dependability is an inquiry audit. An auditor who is in no way connected to the study examines for example, the interview notes and daily journal of the researcher/s and attests to their dependability. The auditor also examines the product that is the data, methods, results, and confirms that the results and recommendations are confirmed by the data.

Confirmability refers to whether or not the results are the result of the study and not of the bias of the researcher. Babbie et al., (2001) recommend an audit trail. The audit trail

involves reviewing six classes of data viz. raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, material relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information.

3.9 Conclusion

In summary this chapter explained the research design, the nature of the sample, the procedure used to gather the data, the data collection techniques, data analysis and lastly how credibility of the research was maintained.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the integration of learners with physical disabilities into mainstream schools. A case study approach, consisting of three cases was selected to achieve the study aims. Each case consisted of the learner, the learner's mother and the educator(s) who first taught the learner at the time of integration into the mainstream school.

This chapter will be divided in two sections. *Section 1* will present the themes that emerged within each case by doing a within-case analysis. *Section 2* will present common themes that emerged across the three cases. In both sections the findings of the study will be synthesised with previous research findings, some of which may have been mentioned in the literature review. To maintain the ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality the names used in this section are pseudonyms, that is, they are not the actual names of participants or the names of the schools

4.2 Section 1

CASE 1

Case 1 consists of a Grade 7 male learner, his mother and the educator (female) who taught him during his first year (Grade 5) at the mainstream school. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality the learner of Case 1 will be referred to as Samuel which is not his real name.

Samuel is a young boy who was 13 years old and in Grade 7 at the time of data collection. He was born via caesarian section and forceps delivery. Reports indicate that he was small at birth and that he was incubated for one week. At two weeks post delivery it was noticed that his leg was broken. It was suspected that his leg had been broken during the delivery.

Samuel was diagnosed with a genetic bone disorder characterised by bones that break easily and often from little or no apparent cause (<http://www.oif.org/site/> retrieved on 15 September 2007). He had delayed physical milestones. Two orthopaedic operations were done at 6 months of age to release his hamstrings. At 4 years of age another operation was performed to release the hamstring of the left leg. Speech and language development was normal.

Samuel was assessed for admission to the special school when he was 6 years 7 months in July 1999. He was accepted and started attending the special school in 1999. He remained at the special school until Grade 3 in 2003. He progressed well at the special school. Physiotherapy was the main therapy provided for Samuel to facilitate independence with daily activities of living, such as, getting in and out of his wheelchair and going to the toilet by himself.

During the mid year progress meetings in 2003 at the special school, the multi-disciplinary team, consisting of the psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and Samuel's educator at the school recommended that Samuel be transferred to a mainstream school. Samuel was coping well academically and was in fact in need of a learning environment that was more challenging for him. He was identified as socially and emotionally equipped for placement in the mainstream. Samuel was eager to go to the mainstream. His mother made enquiries at the local school in his home area. Contact was made with the Education Management District Centre regarding structural changes that would be needed for Samuel at the mainstream school. Samuel's physiotherapist visited the mainstream school, prior to his placement, to provide input with the ramps that had to be built for him.

Samuel is the more physically disabled of the three learners. He is wheelchair bound. He is able to move in and out of the wheelchair unassisted. He needed assistance with

toileting, at the mainstream school, because the toilets were not adapted to his needs, that is, in terms of size.

4.2.1 Emergent Themes within Case 1

The emergent themes for Case 1 are highlighted in terms of (a) concerns, (b) challenges, (c) support and (d) socio-emotional adjustment during the first year of Samuel's placement in the mainstream

4.2.1(a) Concerns

How the children was going to adjust (to) him.

Samuel and his mother were worried about how his peers at the mainstream school would respond to him and if he would fit in.

Samuel's mother said:

“But my only problem was how the children was going to adjust (to) him because children can be very cruel.”

Samuel stated:

“First I thought how's the children gonna (going to) treat me and uhm am I gonna (going to) fit in?”

In various studies (Mowes, 2002; Palmer et al., 2001; Pivik et al., 2002) parents and educators expressed the same concern. Parents who were opposed to inclusion did not want to expose their children to a mainstream setting because they felt that mainstream society and particularly children, could be very cruel towards children with disabilities. Parents further commented that children in the mainstream would be curious about their child's disability and as a result may harm them by making hurtful remarks.

A study conducted by Norwich and Kelly (2004) showed that 83% of a total of 101 participants experienced name calling and teasing. This became a reality for Samuel as he had to deal with name calling and children talking about him. Fortunately, Samuel did not allow the situation to impact on him negatively. He told his educator about it and he started speaking to the children about his disability. He asserted himself by informing his peers that he had a right to be at a mainstream school just as they did.

4.2.1(b) Challenges

Call you names

Samuel had to deal with name-calling by some of the learners at the mainstream school.

Samuel mentioned:

“Only some children are rude . . . call you names and that. . .”

He dealt with the situation by informing his educator. The educator then dealt with the name calling by speaking to the learners involved. There was a positive change after the educator spoke to the learners.

He stated:

“I did tell (told) the teacher so she explained to the children my situation and there was a change after that.”

People talking in the classroom

The learners in Samuel’s class did not know about his disability therefore they asked him many questions. They wanted to know the reason he was at the school and the reason that he was in a wheelchair.

Samuel said:

“People talking in the classroom about why am I (I am) here and why am I (I am) the only child in the wheelchair.”

Samuel handled the situation by confronting the learners and telling them the reason that he moved to the mainstream.

He explained:

“I confronted them and told them because I’m too smart to stay in a special school.”

So, at first Samuel and his mother’s fears were confirmed however it was only for a short time. Samuel had to deal with name calling and learners talking about him because they lacked the knowledge about his disability.

Everybody was too eager to help him

Initially, a challenge for Samuel was that the learners’ were overeager to help him.

Samuel’s mother explained:

“Everybody was too eager to help him in the beginning because the children would push him and he’s very scared of falling and he knows if he fall (falls) he (can) break something. So that was his problem in the beginning but he’s been adjusting very well”

Initially, a challenge for Samuel was that the learners were overeager to help him. Everyone was eager to push him in his wheelchair. This was a problem for Samuel because if he had fallen it would have had severe physical implications. He was

therefore unhappy with this situation because he was afraid of falling and getting hurt. The learners at the mainstream school did not know how to deal with Samuel mainly because they did not know about his condition and his level of independence. They did not consider the possibility that Samuel was able to push himself and that he was afraid of being pushed by others. Many parents, learners and professionals agree that those without disabilities often do not understand the person with a disability. Sometimes those without the disabilities assume they know what is best for the person with the disability. In a study conducted by Jones (2005), learners recommended disability equality training for peers in the mainstream to facilitate a better understanding of disability. Such training should highlight both strengths and abilities of those with disabilities.

His mother dealt with the above situation by approaching the principal of the school.

She stated

“I went to the principal so the principal said that he’s going ... he had a meeting with the children, he explained to them the whole situation. Him (Samuel) being disabled, it doesn’t mean that they have to push him around.”

Also, Samuel’s mother said that he was assertive and began telling the learners not to push him.

She said:

“Samuel himself is not scared to tell you not to touch him.”

There was a class that used to be right upstairs

During his first year at the mainstream school Samuel and his classmates had different lessons with different educators. The educators were in different classes so the learners had to go to the educators’ classroom. One of the educators was on the top floor which meant that Samuel was unable to get up the stairs by himself. He was then carried to the top by an adult which was always a male educator.

The educator stated:

“In the beginning there was a class that used to be right upstairs . . . so they used to take him up but it wasn’t safe so they stopped it Somebody took him upstairs like one of the teachers or whatever but it wasn’t safe ...so they stopped that and now all the classes are at the bottom. They, they just brought down all the classes.”

The school addressed this challenge by ensuring that all Samuel’s classes were on the ground floor. However, the class still moved from one educator to the next. The educators at the mainstream school dealt with the situation less expeditiously because the class allocations for the year had already been done. Although the structural

challenge did not have a significant effect on the learning context for Samuel, it did impact on others in his context. For example, a male educator had to be called to take him to the second floor and there were dangers involved in moving him.

The following year the school accommodated Samuel even more. The educators now came to Samuel's classroom so that there was no movement from class to class.

The educator explained:

“This year we changed that so he stays in his class.”

Samuel confirmed:

“The teacher come (comes) to me now. I don't go to them anymore. The teacher come (comes) to the class.”

They had a (an) Afrikaans and a (an) English class in one (combined)

Samuel is an English speaking boy who was in an English speaking class at the special school however when he moved to the mainstream school the medium of instruction proved to be a challenge for him. The English and Afrikaans class for his Grade had been combined. The educator therefore had to teach using both languages.

Samuel's mother exclaimed:

“I was very upset because they had a (an) Afrikaans and a (an) English class in one section. It was a whole class but the half gets Afrikaans and the other half gets English. I thought it was gonna (going to) get confusing.”

His mother had not known about this until he was placed at the mainstream school. Initially she was upset because she was concerned that he would become confused. Despite Samuel's mother's concern, Samuel dealt with the situation effectively.

Samuel explained:

“It was strange because I have never heard about the teacher speaking two languages to different kind of class (classes), in one (the educator code switching between English and Afrikaans) ... I listened when she speak (spoke) English and did my work when she was speaking Afrikaans”

Both Samuel and his mother had assumed that he would be taught in English only. They did not anticipate that the English and Afrikaans class in his grade would be combined. Liaison between the special and mainstream school prior to the placement could have resolved this challenge. Had the two educators communicated they would have learnt

about the teaching situation in the mainstream school. Due to poor communication, the mother was not informed of the teaching situation.

4.2.1(c) Support Services

Participants identified support that would have been useful for effective inclusion to take place with Samuel's placement.

To find places, to find wheelchairs, or either to fix it

The educator wanted a list of places that the school could contact to maintain Samuel's wheelchair or to get a new one.

The educator recommended:

“It would be useful if the school can get to know places ... because we have been sponsored to find places, to find wheelchairs or either to fix it.”

There is no real communication between us

There was no communication between the educator at the mainstream school and Samuel's educator at the special school.

The educator stated:

“He is here (mainstream school) and there is no real communication between us.”

They (special school staff) could come out to the (mainstream) school and check out the setup

The educator felt that the staff from the special school should have come to the mainstream school to assess the structural challenges of the school. Doing so would have helped with decisions regarding classes upstairs and the movement of learners to the different educators.

The educator explained:

“They should also ensure that the setup where they send the child to...they (special school staff) could come out to the (mainstream) school and check out the setup.”

Samuel’s educator in the mainstream wanted support in terms of maintaining Samuel’s wheelchair. She wanted a list of places where they could go to fix Samuel’s wheelchair. This list could have been provided if there was liaison between the educators in the mainstream and the special school. The educator went on to say there was no communication between her and the educator at the special school. The educator

further recommended that the special school assess the learning context that the learner would be exposed to at the mainstream school.

Support identified by the educator is consistent with some of the challenges that were mentioned. Liaison between the two educators would have led to problem-solving the language and structural challenges that Samuel was faced with when he was first integrated into the mainstream. This liaison also makes sense when one considers the recommendation for parent support given by the educator at the mainstream school. If the parent was better prepared for the challenges then she would have been able to address them prior to the placement.

She (the mother) should be prepared

The educator felt that Samuel's mother should have been prepared for Samuel's integration. Doing so would have helped her better cope with the challenges that Samuel experienced during the move from the special to the mainstream school.

The educator stated:

“I think it's also necessary that she (the mother) should be prepared. Because obviously the challenges she faced with him being there (at the special school) is different to what she is facing with him being here.”

I think they should prepare the child before the child comes here

Samuel felt that he could have been more prepared for the increased workload in the mainstream. He asserted that the level of the work at the special school was easy and that he should have been challenged more so that he was better able to cope with the increased workload in the mainstream.

Samuel asserted:

“I think they should prepare the child, before the child comes here (mainstream school) . . . by giving them a little bit of normal work and not so easy work . . . then I would catch up easier with the work. It’s very hard because the work is more (in the mainstream)”

I think they should have given him more mainstream mathematics

The mother mentioned that the special school should have provided specific support in the numeracy learning area, previously known as mathematics, so that Samuel was on par with the mainstream curriculum when he was placed in the mainstream school.

Samuel’s mother stated:

“I think they should have given him more mainstream mathematics, especially mathematics that they should be doing at the mainstream school. If the child is capable of doing it . . . I think that they should feed that information to the child”

Although his mother did not help him with his mathematics she told Samuel to pay more attention to his educator during mathematics teaching. She also recommended that he ask for help when he did not understand.

His mother said:

“So I told him to start listening to the teacher and start asking questions. And I think that’s what he did because he came right on his own.”

The theme of preparing Samuel for the mainstream is highlighted. Support here could have been provided by the special school the year prior to placement at the mainstream school. Participants said that the special school could have provided more support with mathematics as well as increasing the workload to match that of the mainstream. Doing so would have resulted in a faster adjustment with the academic workload in the mainstream. Once again this learner support could have happened if there had been improved interaction between the special school and the mainstream school prior to Samuel’s integration.

4.2.1(d) Socio-emotional adjustment

He missed the activities at Fairdale (special school). Initially, Samuel missed the special school but as he became familiar with his new environment he adjusted well to the

mainstream environment.

His mother stated:

“At first he didn’t wanted to be there because I think he missed the activities at Fairdale (special school).”

He’s very talkative and he’ll make friends easily

His mother described Samuel as an open person who related well to peers therefore he was able to make new friends, easily. His ability to meet new friends with ease contributed to his adjustment to the mainstream school.

Samuel’s mother commented:

“Samuel is a very open person. He’s very talkative and he’ll make friends easily.”

Samuel agreed:

“I talk with everyone in class and make jokes with everyone, and everyone knows me”

He would ask somebody for help

Samuel would approach someone when he needed help.

His mother stated:

“Yes I think he would ask somebody for help if he needs it.”

They were so eager to take him to the toilet

His peers took an active role in assisting him.

His educator commented:

“Toilet duties there was also someone, they were so eager to take him to the toilet.”

Samuel experienced many physical challenges at the mainstream school however, the mainstream school was happy to accommodate his needs. A major challenge for all involved was the time it took to accomplish the structural changes for him, such as ramps. At the time of the interview the ramps had been built for him but the toilets still had to be adapted for him. These toilet changes were planned but he was leaving the school to go to high school. Despite this challenge Samuel was assisted with toileting by one of his peers.

Samuel is an adolescent who easily makes friends. His mother describes him as an open person who relates well with peers. In addition, he went to a local mainstream school in his area which meant that some of his friends attended the school. Knowing a familiar person at the new school has a positive effect on a learner’s ability to adjust to a new

setting (Priestley & Rabiee, 2002). It increases the chances of the learner meeting new friends.

There is usually great emotional upheaval during adolescence as a result of hormonal changes and conflicts to identity autonomy (Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 1996). According to Brooks-Gunn and Graber (1996) a supportive home environment will facilitate the ability of a child to discuss their difficulties with parents and/or siblings so that the emotional upheaval is minimised. Samuel was able to discuss his problems with his mother. She then addressed the problems by speaking to the principal about it.

4.2.1(e) Ecological systems theory

Despite the challenges that Samuel had to deal with, he adjusted well to the mainstream. The findings of his case indicate the lack of communication between all stakeholders, that is, the parent, the special school and the mainstream school. The parent should have been more informed of the learning context at the mainstream school and by the same token, the educators at the mainstream school should have been informed about the practicalities of having a learner with a wheelchair at the school and in the classroom. An ecological systems approach would have resulted in communication between the different systems mentioned so that some challenges were solved prior to his placement.

In Samuel's case, he was on par academically with his peers in the mainstream. He was also able to adapt to the social setting of the mainstream by dealing with it in an emotionally appropriate manner and therefore equilibrium of the different systems was quickly established.

To summarise, Samuel's adjustment to the mainstream school went well despite the initial attitudinal, structural and linguistic challenges. Some of the challenges could have been avoided with improved liaison between the special and mainstream school prior to his placement. Even with the challenges, Samuel adjusted well to his new setting. It would appear that his personality, the school's willingness to accommodate his needs and his mother's support contributed to the success of his integration in the mainstream.

CASE 2

Case 2 consists of a Grade 5 female learner, her mother and the educator (female) who taught her during her first year at the mainstream school. For convenience the learner of Case 2 will be referred to as Sarah, which is not her real name.

Sarah is an English speaking young girl who was 12 years 6 months at the time of data collection. Sarah was born full term via normal delivery. She had delayed speech and physical milestones. According to her mother she had seizures when her teeth were erupting. She was diagnosed with Spastic Right Hemiplegia which is a form of cerebral palsy (CP). Hemiplegia implies that one half of the body (such as the right arm and leg) is affected. Spasticity means that there is too much muscle tone or tightness. Movements are stiff, especially in the legs, arms, and/or back. Children with this form of CP move their legs awkwardly, turning in or scissoring their legs as they try to walk and as a result may have a physical disability that can affect mobility (<http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs2txt.htm> retrieved on 10 September 2007)

Sarah was referred for admission to the special school because she was coping well academically and was above the academic level of the peers in her class at the special school. Sarah's mother was informed of the recommendation for her to be placed in the mainstream. Her mother and grandparents intentionally selected a school in the area that was close to home. This school was also chosen because Sarah's mother had attended the school during her primary school years. Sarah's mother and grandmother were familiar with the school and the staff.

Sarah is an only child. Her mother is a single parent however she is contact with her dad. She has a close relationship with her grandparents (mother's parents).

4.2.2 Emergent themes within Case 2

The emergent themes for Case 2 are highlighted in terms of (a) concerns, (b) challenges, (c) support and (d) socio-emotional adjustment during the first year of Sarah's placement in the mainstream

4.2.2(a) Concerns

Children you know can mock

Sarah's mother was concerned that Sarah would be mocked at the mainstream school because of her physical disability however this never happened.

Sarah's mother said:

“I used to worry about children, you know, can mock ... but they actually never noticed that Sarah is different.”

4.2.2(b) Challenges

Exercise in cursive

According to the educator, Sarah only had one difficulty; she was unable to write in cursive when she started at the mainstream school. She soon learnt to write in cursive without any difficulties and even outperformed her peers.

The educator stated:

“She only had one little problem. That was when I gave her an exercise in cursive. And then her mother phoned to tell us she is struggling. They (special school) didn’t teach her cursive. But believe me or not in two days the most for a week, she had it. And she could do it better than the children who were taught the previous year.”

At my other school I didn’t get this lot of (much) work

The workload at the mainstream school increased however Sarah worked harder to make sure her work was done.

Sarah’s mother stated:

“Like I said at the beginning it was a bit difficult, she worked harder but her work was always done.”

Sarah commented:

“At my other school (special school) I didn’t get this lot of (much) work.”

She does however, struggle a bit with Maths

According to her mother, Sarah struggled with mathematics however her mother assisted her to make sure she was able to understand and apply the concepts.

Sarah's mother stated:

“She does however struggle a bit with Maths but Maths is one subject that I have to work with her. She doesn't struggle, like struggle but she needs to grasp the concepts. It takes a while for her to grasp the concept but once she has it, then she applies it.”

Although her mother mentioned that she struggled with mathematics, the educator at the mainstream school felt that she had no academic difficulties.

The educator stated:

“She didn't struggle man, and from the other learners in my class she was an A (student). Maths, English even Afrikaans. She was good in it.”

Although Sarah's mother identified that Sarah struggled with mathematics, the educator did not mention this. In fact she reported that Sarah's progress was good - even in mathematics.

Sarah and her mother mentioned a few challenges which included writing in cursive at the mainstream school, the increased workload and difficulties with mathematics. It is interesting to note that the educator did not mention any of the above as problems. In

fact, she concluded that Sarah's progress was good in all learning areas. The cursive writing, increased workload and difficulties with mathematics could have been addressed if there had been increased communication between the special and mainstream school. In Sarah's case, her mother was very involved in her schooling. Her mother assisted her with mathematics so that she could overcome her difficulties.

4.2.2(c) Support Services

We're very good friends with the teachers at the school

Sarah's family chose a specific mainstream school for Sarah for very specific reasons. Her mother and grandmother were familiar with the staff and the school.

Sarah's mother stated:

“We decided on Ceres Primary (mainstream school) because I went to the school, my brother went to the school and we're very good friends with the teachers at the school. I spoke to the teacher and my mom spoke to the principal at the time.”

The support was there

There was general agreement that Sarah had a good support structure in place to help her cope with the move to the mainstream.

The educator stated:

“I think Sarah actually has a good support structure ... the support was there.”

Sarah’s mother confirmed:

“And we knew that the correct support structure would be in place.”

I would explain to the parent

The educator reported that Sarah’s mother would phone her if she or Sarah was not sure about something. The educator would then give an explanation so that Sarah’s mother could assist her at home.

The educator said:

“Man, if they were not sure about something they would phone me and I will explain (it). Her mother was actually also in my class.”

She must explain to me

The educator helped Sarah when she needed help by explaining the work to her individually. Sarah was able to assert her need for help from the educator when necessary.

Sarah stated:

“I asked my teacher for help...I would tell the teacher the work is getting difficult for me ... she must explain to me ... she must help me “

Her mother agreed:

“The teacher Mrs X used to explain it to the class and then she used to explain it to her individually.”

She used to get the physiotherapy and the occupational therapy

Sarah's mother stated that she would have liked support in terms of physiotherapy when Sarah moved to the mainstream. She specified that daily exercises for Sarah would have been helpful for her.

Sarah's mother commented:

“The one advantage that I really miss about Fairdale (special school) is the therapy you know she used to get the physiotherapy and the occupational therapy. And I do miss that ... I think what would have made it easier if I maybe got a list of exercises that I could do on a daily basis, or a list of doctors or therapists that I could contact to help her ... Physios that know specific stuff.”

Hanson et al. (2001) found that parents sometimes made a decision for mainstream placement on whether or not therapy services would be available in the mainstream. In

Sarah's case, her mother realised that she could benefit from physiotherapy support in the mainstream once she had been placed there.

Maybe if they sent us some few forms

The educator would have liked a report from the special school outlining specific aspects about the learner that would help the educator prepare more appropriately for the learner's placement at the mainstream school.

The educator suggested:

“Maybe if they sent us some few forms, for example ... the cursive story. Just to let us know what did they did or didn't do ... so you know where to start with this child. Just maybe a written report. Especially in the beginning to inform you about this child, the situation of this child and how he or she is coping.”

4.2.2(d) Socio-emotional adjustment

She was familiar with her educator

Sarah's mother attributes Sarah's success in the mainstream to her personality and the educator who Sarah was familiar with and who made her feel comfortable.

Sarah's mother stated:

“With Sarah, with her personality it was a bit easier. And also with Miss X being her teacher she was familiar with her educator and Miss X made her feel at home and made her feel welcome”

Sarah is very popular at school

There was agreement that Sarah was a popular girl at the mainstream school.

The educator stated:

“Sarah is very popular at school.”

Her mother commented:

“Socially she is too popular for my liking.”

She interacts with anybody

Sarah has many friends at school because she interacts with everybody

Sarah's educator commented:

“Well, Sarah comes (gets) along with everybody and social wise she got (has) a lot of friends.”

Her mother stated:

“She interacts with anybody so that was actually very good.”

She makes friends easily

Sarah makes friends easily. Her mother commented that she was like her in this regard.

Sarah's educator mentioned:

“Sarah is a person who immediately makes friends.”

Her mother concluded:

“Sarah is very much like me ... she makes friends easily.”

She made quite a lot of friends

Sarah agreed that she made many friends at the new school.

Sarah's educator mentioned:

“She made quite a lot of friends”

Sarah agreed:

“I made a lot of new friends.”

All her friends in the road are there

Many of Sarah's friends in her neighbourhood attended the mainstream school therefore it was easier for her to adjust to the new school.

Sarah's mother suggested:

“I think she was very excited because her friends were there. It was very easy because all her friends in the road are there.”

Sarah agreed:

“Some of my friends who live here opposite were in my class in Grade 4. And I know most of them.”

The teacher and my mommy were mos (slang) good friends

Sarah's mother and her educator at the mainstream school were friends which made it easier for parent-educator communication when it was needed.

Sarah's mother stated:

“She was familiar with her educator and Miss X made her feel at home and made her feel welcome.”

Sarah confirmed:

“The teacher and my mommy were mos good friends. I was in her class in Grade four, the first year.”

The educator concurred:

“And maybe because I know her Mom and if I have a problem with this child I would be able to contact the parent and the two of us would be able to understand each other so that we can help her.”

Sarah's case is a good example of a learner with an excellent support structure that made it possible for her to be emotionally well adjusted. Apart from that, her mother had intentionally put processes in place to ensure that she was integrated successfully in the mainstream. She knew familiar persons at the mainstream school. Her friends were at the school and she was familiar with the educator. She was therefore in an environment where she felt safe, valued and had a sense of belonging in the class. All these factors contribute to active participation (Voltz et al., 2001). Her case concurs with findings presented in the literature, that friendships and peer acceptance have a critical influence on an adolescent's adjustment in the mainstream (Doll, 1996; Heller & Swindle, 1983; Ladd & Oden, 1979).

4.2.2(e) Ecological systems theory

Despite a lack of communication between the systems that impacted on Sarah, her integration to the mainstream was successful. According to Donald et al. (2002), the child's biological and psychological makeup (genetic and developmental history) forms the basis of this model of the ecological systems theory. Her case demonstrates how the ability to adjust well to new situations had a positive influence in her adjustment to the mainstream. Although improved communication between the two school systems would have resulted in better preparation for the educator, Sarah was able to integrate into the mainstream, successfully.

To conclude, Sarah's integration into the mainstream was highly successful. This success can be attributed to her personality and her ability to make friends easily. In addition, her family intentionally selected a mainstream school in the area that they were familiar with. Her mother and her uncle (mother's brother) had attended the school during their primary school education and so both her mother and grandmother had a relationship with the educator at the mainstream school.

CASE 3

Case 3 consists of a Grade 5 female learner, her mother and the educators (first a male educator then a female educator) who taught her during her first year in the mainstream setting. For convenience the learner of Case 3 will be referred to as Martha, which is not her real name.

Martha is a young girl who was 13 years old and in Grade 7 at the time of data collection. She was born at 31 weeks gestation via normal delivery. Her mother noticed that her physical development was not commensurate for her age. Although she spoke well and had a good understanding of language, she was clumsy and struggled with fine motor movements.

She was diagnosed with Spastic Right Hemiplegia. This term was explained in Case 2. She was referred to the special school because of her physical delay. The report from the referring hospital indicated that she was 'educable'. It stated that she was a candidate for special school placement however she would possibly be suitable for mainstream placement at a later stage.

Martha was assessed for admission at the special school at 2 years 11 months in March 1996. She was admitted to the Nursery School in 1997. She stayed at the special school until she was in Grade 4 in 2003. Martha showed good progress throughout her schooling at the special school. Therapeutic support was provided by the physiotherapist and occupational therapists. Physiotherapy was provided after botox injections in the right ankle.

Martha is the only child. Her mother is a single parent. She has had very little contact with her father. Martha is very close to her mother. She and her mother live alone.

4.2.3 Emergent themes within Case 3

The emergent themes for Case 3 are highlighted in terms of (a) concerns, (b) challenges, (c) support and (d) socio-emotional adjustment during the first year of Martha's placement in the mainstream.

4.2.3(a) Concerns

The big classes

Martha's mother was concerned about the big classes in the mainstream and that Martha would not receive the attention she needed.

Martha's mother stated:

“I was like, the big classes, maybe she would get lost in this big class, at the back. The teacher not noticing her.”

Martha's mother was concerned about the big classes in the mainstream and that Martha would not receive the attention she needed. Her concern is a valid one for learners with barriers to learners. Vanderpuye, Deku and Kwarteng (2006) assert that research has shown that class size can affect the inclusion process. A small class size, that is, between 20-30 learners, has positive effects in the inclusive classroom. Bennett (1987 cited in Vanderpuye et al., 2006) and Mowes (2002) found that smaller class size results in increased learner-educator interaction, greater achievement gains for learners with

lower academic ability and improved classroom management. Although Martha's mother had a valid concern, Martha was academically able to cope at the mainstream school and that being the case, class size did not matter in her case.

4.2.3(b) Challenges

She did not start with the cursive writing

Martha was unable to write in cursive when she went to the mainstream. Her mother stated that she was miserable in the mainstream initially because she had not learnt to do so at the special school.

Martha's mother stated:

“The teacher at Grade 4 (special school) she did not start with the cursive writing. Then when she got to Grade 5 (mainstream) she had to write things from the board in cursive ... and it was the child was miserable. If the teacher (at the mainstream school) had known.”

When she came here her confidence wasn't so high

Sarah's confidence was low when she first came to the mainstream.

The educator stated:

“When she came here her confidence wasn’t so high.”

Experience of a male teacher

Both the mother and educator at the first school mentioned that Martha’s adjustment at the first mainstream school was difficult because the educator was male. She had not been exposed to a male educator before.

The educator stated:

“It was the first time she had an experience of a male teacher.”

Her mother commented:

“I think if she was exposed to male teachers at the special school.”

Maybe the children were too rowdy for her

There was general consensus that the noise levels in the mainstream class was too much for Martha to cope with.

Martha’s mother stated:

“I sometimes I feel that maybe the children were too rowdy for her.”

Educator at first mainstream school suggested:

“Maybe the noise level was too much for her ... was possibly because they a very lively class.”

Educator at the second mainstream school agreed:

“At first yes because I could see that she got agitated because there were too many children in this class and they are noisy.”

Martha disagreed with the above statements. According to her, it was not so much the bigger numbers but that she did not know the new children.

She stated:

“Yes, because there was (were) more children and children I did not really know. At Fairdale (special school) I knew everybody’s name and I felt more comfortable.”

He had to shout at them

Martha struggled to deal with the educator shouting in the classroom. He shouted at the learners in the class in order to maintain order in the classroom.

Educator at first mainstream school stated:

“I have to use my voice so maybe that’s also something she could not get to grips with ... Uhm, I don’t know what type of disciplinary measures they have at a special school because here I have to shout. I use my voice so the voice is the only weapon.”

Her mother mentioned:

“And he shouted and she wasn’t used to that. All of a sudden there was this (were these) rude boys and he had to shout at them. It was also a bit overwhelming.”

Martha emphasises that it was the learners in the classroom and the atmosphere of the school and not so much the educator.

She stated:

“It wasn’t really the teacher it was more the children and the atmosphere of the school.”

Martha moved to two mainstream schools after she left the special school. The first school did not meet her needs. It was her first exposure to cursive writing, a male educator, the class was too noisy for her as a result she withdrew and did not want to be at the school. According to Eccles (1999), children will display negative behaviours and low self-confidence during adolescence when the environment does not suit the child’s needs.

Adjustment at the second mainstream school

She became used to everything

Initially Martha struggled to adjust to the second school but as time progressed her educator said that she adjusted to the differences in the mainstream, that is, the high noise level, the increased number of learners in the classroom and the educator's tone of voice.

Educator at second mainstream school stated:

“At first when she came she would just cut herself off from the rest of the class ... at a later stage she became used to everything, to the noise level, to the amount of learners in the class. And sometimes teacher had to use a high tone of voice, she got used to that.”

Maybe the teacher had something to do with it

Martha's mother suggests that the female educator at the second mainstream school had a positive effect on Martha.

Martha's mother stated:

“Maybe the teacher had something to do with it. There was a nice female teacher, the motherly type.”

Her cousin was also at the school at the time

Martha's cousin was at the school and her mother knew the principal at the second mainstream school.

Martha's mother mentioned:

“Her cousin was also at the school at the time...and my friend is the principal.

Maybe that was it. He spoke to her before she came (went) there.”

The educator at first mainstream school agreed:

“I spoke to her and she said: ‘My cousin was over there (second mainstream school)’ and she rather wants to be there.”

Priestley and Rabiee (2002) emphasise that having a familiar person in the new school setting makes a significant difference to the learner who has to adjust to the new setting.

In Martha's case it definitely had a positive impact.

Martha's mother attributes Martha's adjustment at the second mainstream school to three factors: (1) she thinks that the female educator was more attuned to Martha (2) Martha's cousin was at the school therefore Martha knew someone at the school which had a positive impact on her adjustment at the second school and lastly (3) the principal at the second school was her mother's friend. The principal spoke to her before she started at the school which may have helped her further adjust to the setting.

4.2.3(c) Support

No need for academic involvement

Martha coped well with the academic work in the mainstream she was at the Grade 5 level for all of her subjects.

Martha's mother stated:

“There was no need for academic involvement more the interacting.”

The educator at the second mainstream school mentioned:

“I was so amazed when Martha came to me there was no backlog of anything.

All her subjects were at Grade 5 level.”

They would explain it to me

The educator explained the work to her if she did not understand.

Martha stated:

“Maybe if I didn’t understand the work then they would explain it to me. But now they don’t need to explain to me anymore. So I don’t need their help to explain anymore.”

Just prepare her mentally

The educators felt that the special school should have informed Martha of the differences between the mainstream and the special schools so that she was more prepared for the realities of the mainstream environment.

The educator at the first mainstream school suggested:

“So what the teacher of the special school could say is ... you are going to go to forty or fifty children. Just prepare her mentally.”

The educator at the second mainstream school added:

“Maybe she should have been prepared, if you are going to get a male teacher if it is male or female, that is you teacher, that is your new environment.”

Maybe more than one day

Both Martha and her mother agreed that the one day she spent at the first mainstream school, the year prior to admission, was not enough for her to fully experience the

mainstream setting. She should have spent more days at the school so that she was able to make an informed decision regarding her placement at that school.

Martha's mother stated:

“I think the day at Sea School (first mainstream school) ... it could have been organised better with the school here, maybe more than one day even ... A few days you know, a day is not enough.”

Martha agreed:

“Maybe I should have stayed a bit longer to make up my mind; maybe the one day was not enough.”

Prepare the child

Once again it was emphasised that she should have been better prepared for the mainstream so that she had a better idea of the changes that would be apparent in the mainstream.

The educator at first mainstream school suggested:

“Preparing the child for what is going to happen. So the child knows ... I'm gonna (going to) see this change and I'm gonna (going to) see that change. So when it does happen it's not a shock.”

Educator at second mainstream school mentioned:

“I don’t think she was prepared. I don’t think you can actually prepare a child for that one hundred percent but just to introduce her.”

A few weeks

There was agreement that if Martha had a few more weeks at the first mainstream school she would have been able to adapt.

The educator at the first mainstream school stated:

“I told the mother she should have left the child here. Give her a few weeks to adapt and if she was still not happy then fine, but I’m sure a couple or few weeks.”

Martha’s mother agreed:

“Ja, give her three or four weeks. I’m sure she would have been able to adapt and make friends.”

Martha did not require academic support of any kind although she desperately needed better emotional preparation for the mainstream setting. Participants recommended that she could have been prepared for the mainstream by informing her of the differences

between the special and mainstream school as well as increasing the amount of time she had spent at the mainstream school, the year prior to her integration. These strategies could have happened if there had been communication between the two schools.

A short discussion with each other (between special and mainstream school educators)

Martha's situation may have been improved if the educator from the special school and the educator from the mainstream school had had a short discussion.

The educator at the second mainstream school suggested:

“I think it could have been best for her if the teachers of the special school and of Sea School (mainstream school) could have had a short interview or discussion with each other ... and say look this is the child that's coming to the school and this is her needs. This is how she performs and this is how I treat her. This is normally how we treat the children and things like that.”

A description of what's she's capable

The educator at the mainstream school suggested that the special school educator should have met with her so that she had a better understanding of Martha's learning style, specifically what she was capable of, her temperament and what would make her comfortable.

The educator at the second mainstream school suggested:

“Maybe a talk to one of her teachers at Fairdale (special school). Giving, giving me a description of what’s she’s capable ... uhm what kind of person she is and how what I could make do to make it comfortable for her. What I could to make her fit in.”

4.2.3(d) Socio-emotional adjustment

She was the centre of attention

She was the centre of attention at the special school however she was part of the crowd at the mainstream school.

Martha’s mother stated

“At Fairdale (special school) she used to get all the attention, everybody knew her. She was the centre of attention now all of a sudden she is part of a big group.”

I was very shy

Martha was very shy when she first moved to the mainstream and as a result she did not speak up in the class.

The educator at the second mainstream school stated:

“She coped well but she was shy, not wanting to put up her hand to give an answer.”

Martha agreed:

“At first and so I was very shy and I didn’t talk to them. I never used to speak up in class. But now we get along well and I can talk about stuff.”

The educator observed that she was uncomfortable approaching her peers.

Educator at second mainstream school mentioned:

“The children weren’t very nasty with her. Its just she didn’t feel comfortable approaching them”

Scared of the children laughing

Martha was scared that the children would laugh at her. This fear affected her interaction with her peers.

Martha's mother commented:

“But speaking up, scared of the children laughing at her.”

Martha agreed:

“Maybe they would laugh or something like that.”

They didn't really know

Martha was scared to tell her peers that she came from a special school because she was afraid that they would laugh at her.

Martha said:

“To some of them I said I came from Fairdale (special school). But they didn't really know what it was (that Fairdale was a special school). I didn't tell them cause I felt shy (to say that she came from the special school)... because they wouldn't understand... they would have laughed or something like that ...because they wouldn't understand where I am coming from.”

Martha's mother stated:

“The children didn't know she came from Fairdale (special school). For some reason she didn't want them to know. Some strange reason but I told the teacher.”

One or two friends

Initially, Martha befriended one or two peers in the class.

The educator at the second mainstream school stated:

“At first she ... had one or two friends.”

The avoidance of social settings by Martha can be explained by Wright (1983). Martha wanted to be part of a social group, that is, the peers in her class, but she was scared of being laughed at and consequently being rejected. She has this overwhelming need to be regarded as non disabled by her peers.

Martha tried and still tries to hide her disability at all costs. Why does she do this? Wright (1983) offers an explanation which I agree with. She asserts that persons with disabilities often have feelings of shame related to the physical disability. They try to conceal their disability at all costs because disability is stigmatised in society. The person feels that the disability makes him/her less desirable resulting in the fear of rejection by peers. By concealing her disability, Martha is able to avoid the possibility of rejection.

They were very supportive towards her

The educator said that Martha's peers tried to make her feel comfortable by being supportive towards her.

The educator at the second mainstream school stated:

“They (the learners in the class) were very supportive towards her and I could see that the girls went out of their way to make her feel comfortable.”

4.3.1(e) Ecological systems theory

According to the ecological systems theory, the learning and behaviour of a learner is dependent on the interactions of the different systems that impact on him/her. So, the interaction between the learner and his/her environment is critical. In Martha's situation, she was moved to a different environment, a different system. According to Thomson et al. (2003) the educator plays an important role in helping the learner adjust to his/her new environment. In Martha's case, she did not cope well with the male educator at the first mainstream school. According to Martha's account of the situation, she attributes her difficulty to adjust to her peers in the classroom.

Martha was scared that the children would laugh at her. This fear affected her interaction with her peers. Her fear echoes findings by Strong and Sandoval (1999)

where learners with neuromuscular disease mentioned that teasing from peers affected their sense of belonging in the mainstream.

Martha was scared to tell her peers that she came from a special school because she was afraid that they would laugh at her or not understand why she had initially been placed at a special school. Once again, her fear of being misunderstood is consistent with previous research findings where learners with neuromuscular disease felt that their peers could not fully understand their differences. Martha strongly felt that her peers would not understand the reason she was initially placed in the mainstream school. She did not want them to know that she was different to them because she feared being ridiculed.

Adolescence is a developmental phase where children want to be part of a peer group. For the adolescent with a physical disability, there may be the fear of being different to peers. By trying to deal with physical difference the adolescent with a physical disability may avoid peer relations or deny the existence of a physical disability (O'Douherty & Brown, 1990). The avoidance of social settings by Martha can also be explained by Wright (1983). Martha wants to be part of a social group, that is, her classmates, but she is scared of being laughed at and consequently being rejected.

The educator concerns about learner performance included focusing on the emotional wellbeing of a learner (Stough & Douglas, 2003). Findings by Stough and Douglas (2003) showed that increasing learners' self-confidence and self esteem was an important aim of ensuring a learner's emotional wellbeing. The educator at the second mainstream school thought that it would build Martha's self esteem if she could assist her peers, academically. The educator asked Martha to assist peers after she had completed her own work. This strategy proved successful with Martha. It was an opportunity for her to realise her strengths and by sharing her skills with others her confidence was improved.

The climate of the classroom is identified as critical in facilitating successful inclusion for the learner with physical disabilities (Voltz et al., 2001). Making sure that the learner's socio-emotional well being is met makes an important contribution for the learner moving to the mainstream. Learners should feel safe, valued and accepted in order for the learner to participate actively in the learning process and ultimately experience a sense of belonging. Martha did not like the school climate of her first mainstream school. Because the educator at the second school was a female and made a concerted effort to tune into her emotional needs, Martha began to feel safe at this school.

In summary, Martha's initial entry into the mainstream was unsuccessful. It seems that her personality and overwhelming fear of rejection, lack of communication between the special and mainstream schools and her difficulty in adjusting to the new setting affected her ability to adjust in the mainstream. Due to her mother's efforts, the second school's involvement, a female educator and eventually her own maturation and willingness to fit in, she is now performing well in the mainstream.

4.3 Section 2

This section presents an across case analysis by presenting common themes that emerged across the three cases from (1) parents, (2) learners and (3) educators. Lastly, (4) mixed participant responses, that is, common themes that emerged across all three participant groupings will be presented.

4.3.1 Parent Responses

4.3.1 (a) Parent Concerns

Children you know can mock

Parents were initially worried about how learners at the special school would respond to their children. They thought that their children would be mocked at the mainstream school.

Mother: case 1 stated:

“But my only problem was how the children was (were) going to adjust (to) him because children can be very cruel.”

Mother: case 2 commented:

“I used to worry about children you know can mock.”

Fairdale (special school) is very protected

Parents agreed that the special school was a protected environment, an environment that protected their children from the outside world.

Mother: case 1 said:

“All his life his been protected his always been in a protected environment it’s been Fairdale 9special school.”

Mother case 2 stated:

“Fairdale (special school) is very protected.”

Parents were concerned that their children would be mocked at the mainstream schools and they agreed that the special school provided a protective environment for their children.

Mockery is a common fear of parents who have children with disabilities (Hansen & Boody, 1998; Pivik et al., 2002). There is the fear that their children will be ridiculed, mistreated and even harmed by learners in the mainstream (Palmer et al., 2001).

Parents felt that the special school was a protective environment. In Martha's case her mother was hesitant to expose her to the mainstream. Macleod (2001) found that parents were hesitant to take their children from the protective environment of the special school.

Despite their hesitance to place their children in the mainstream, parents are beginning to become aware of the benefits of inclusion. More parents now want their children to attend local mainstream schools with siblings and peers (Alton, 1998).

4.3.1(b) Challenges identified by Parents

The workload is a lot

Parents acknowledged that the workload at the mainstream school was more than their child had received at the special school.

Mother case 1 stated:

“It was a lot for him in the beginning. He wasn’t used to all the home work.”

Mother case 2 agreed:

“The workload is a lot ... much more than Fairdale (special school) but it’s the norm.”

Math’s is one subject that I have to work with her

The learners’ struggled with mainstream mathematics, particularly when they first entered the mainstream setting.

Mother case 1 stated:

“Only in the beginning he used to complain about the the mathematics he didn’t understand the mathematics.”

Mother case 2 agreed:

“When she was in the mainstream she had to adjust a lot when it came to maths.”

Parents felt that the special school should have placed specific emphasis on mathematics before their children were placed at mainstream schools. Norwich and Kelly (2004) conducted a study where they examined the views of 101 boys and girls between the ages of 10 -11 and 13 -14 years of age. The aim of the study was to investigate views regarding experiences of school, teaching and learning at the mainstream and special

school. The results showed that both the mainstream and special school learners identified mathematics as a subject that was more difficult to learn compared to other subjects. In this study the parents rather than the learners and parents identified mathematics as an area of difficulty for their children. Given that mathematics is identified as a difficult subject it does make sense that the mainstream school curriculum would be more demanding and taxing compared to the mathematics taught at the special school.

Give them a bit extra work

Parents felt that the special school should increase the workload prior to the learner's placement in the mainstream.

Mother case 1 suggested:

“So I think there should be a period before they put a child in the mainstream and if the child is capable of doing it they should like gradually introduce that work to the child.”

Mother case 2 stated:

“... The year before she goes give them a bit (of) extra work or spend a bit more time ... so that they can know the basics.”

I would not take Fairdale (special school) out of her life

Mothers said that they would not have changed the fact their children had started their schooling at the special school.

Mother case 1 said:

“I think I would n’t take away that few years that he had at Fairdale (special school). I wouldn’t take it away.”

Mother case 2 stated:

“I would not take Fairdale (special school) out of her life. No, I wouldn’t have changed anything.”

Challenges at the mainstream school included increased workload and specific difficulties with mathematics. Mothers recommended that the special school increase the workload the year prior to the mainstream placement. Doing so would make it easier for the learner to adjust to the increased workload at the mainstream school. Lastly, a theme not anticipated by the researcher emerged. Mothers expressed that they would not have changed the fact that their child had started schooling at a special school.

4.3.2 Educators' responses

I gave them a talk before she came

All the educators spoke to their learners before the learner with barriers to learning was placed in their class.

Educator case 1 stated:

“I gave them a talk before she came.”

Educator case 2 commented:

“So I spoke to my class and I said to myself we need to make it comfortable for her here. Yes, I definitely told them and what to expect from them.”

Educator case 3 mentioned:

“I explained to them like I always say to my kids everybody's special here,”

Once or twice thing

Educators emphasised that learners should visit the mainstream school at least once prior to placement. Doing so would introduce them to the new environment.

Educator case 2 suggested:

“Once or twice thing, just to make her aware of what to expect. If she wants to go to the classroom, library, this is the hall just a tour. So, if it can happen over one or two days it can give him a sense of ‘where I'm going to’.”

Educator case 3 recommended:

“I would say for 3 weeks, once a week. Just to sit in.

Just maybe a written report

Educators felt that a report would be useful when a learner was placed in their class.

Educator case 2 suggested:

“Just maybe a written report”

Educator case 3 recommended:

“We normally ask for a report.”

I (the educator) thought I’m gonna be the doctor

The quotations from educators below expresses a lack of knowledge regarding learners with physical disabilities as well as a lack of knowledge of the learner prior to placement in his/her classroom.

Educator case 2:

“So I thought I’m gonna be the doctor or the nurse or the (laughing) cos I did n’t know what to expect and er I thought the child would throw a tantrum.”

Educator case 3

“Cause I was wondering why does this child have all this knowledge even more than the rest of the class.”

How we should treat them even here in our environment

Educators would have liked information specific to the particular learner. They agreed that the information would have helped them make the learner more comfortable in the mainstream classroom.

Educator case 3, mainstream school 1, stated:

“She is this or that; she used to or not used interacting. Yes I think that would’ve helped...”

Educator case 3, mainstream school 2 agreed:

“And to speak to the other teachers to find out what would have made their learners comfortable.”

Educator case 2 stated:

“How we should treat them even here in our environment.”

Common themes for the educators centered on preparing the learners in the mainstream, communication (between the special and mainstream school), preparing the learner for

the mainstream school and educator fears on mainstream placement with the learner coming from the special school

Educator concerns and recommendations for support

Fears regarding a learner's medical condition was highlighted. Educators' fears should be viewed as a normal reaction when a learner with a disability is going to be placed in a mainstream classroom (Strong & Sandoval, 1999). In order to deal with the aforementioned fears the educators in this study recommended collaboration with the special school. Their recommendation is in line with recommendations by Strong and Sandoval (1999) who also suggest communication between the special and mainstream school and the parent. Collaborating with the special school encouraged educators to learn more about the learner and his/her needs prior to him/her being placed in the mainstream classroom. Voltz et al. (2001) also recommends that general and special educators collaborate in order to problem solve challenges that a learner may face in the inclusion process.

Peer teaching was also regarded as a way in which the special education educator could assist the mainstream educator (Mowes, 2002). Peer teaching would allow the special education educator to go into the mainstream class to demonstrate how the mainstream educator could interact and teach the learner with barriers to learning.

So, there is consensus that communication and collaboration between the main stakeholders can reduce fears which will result in better understanding of the learner and facilitate critical links between the special and mainstream school (Mowes, 2002; Voltz et al., 2001)

4.3.3 Learner responses

There were no common learner responses. Each learner had a very different experience of integration into the mainstream. The learners in the study did not always see the challenges identified by parents and educators as problems. Based on my own interactions and interviews with the learners', they currently enjoy being at the mainstream school and would not choose to go back to a special school setting.

4.4 Mixed Participant Responses

These were common themes that emerged across the participant groupings.

We need a two-way communication between us and the mother

Communication between educators and parents were regarded as important.

Educator case 1 stated:

“We need a two-way communication between us (mainstream school) and the mother.”

Mother case 3 agreed:

“Definitely there needs to be teacher and parent involvement and interaction, more so than with the ‘ordinary’ child.”

The communication between the two educators

Communication between the special and mainstream school educators was highlighted as important.

Educator case 1 stated:

“It will also help if we had that bridge or communication or support system from the special schools.”

Mother case 1 mentioned:

“The communication between the two educators”

Educator case 2:

“Just communication between schools and educators”

Educator case 3 commented:

“Maybe if there was that interaction from Fairdale (special school) and between the teacher (at the mainstream school) that was going to take her.”

Mother case 3 agreed:

“So communication between the two teachers is compulsory”

A further suggestion was made that the parent be present when the two educators meet so that carryover in the home environment is facilitated.

Educator case 1 suggested:

“Possibly the parent could be present when the two teachers liaise ... so that they can also just consolidate or take it further at home.”

Assessment of the level of work

Participants agreed that information about a learner’s level of functioning was helpful.

Educator case 3 stated:

“Maybe it would have helped if the teachers know from day one, where the child is at.”

Mother case 2 mentioned:

“Maybe if the teachers can also be in contact and say look here. This is our level and this is the type of work that we’re doing.”

Educator case 2:

“Assessment of the level of work.”

Mother case 3:

“The teacher at the mainstream school should know more about at what level the child is so that that teacher has a better idea.”

The above-mentioned themes indicate a need for communication and collaborative efforts between the special and the mainstream school. Successful inclusion involves collaborative efforts between all stakeholders to problem-solve the situation within which the learner is placed, fosters self directed learning and facilitates critical discourse (Dixon, 2005).

The theme of communication has been highlighted in all of the cases. Communication between (a) the home and the school, (b) between the mainstream educator and the special school educator was emphasized as important. This is consistent with previous

findings (Pivik et al., 2002). Findings by Strong and Sandoval (1999) showed that educators viewed communication as an ongoing concern. They emphasised the importance of frequent and consistent communication when a learner has a disability. In fact Engelbrecht et al. (2005) goes to the extent where they assert that inclusion will fail if there is no collaboration between educators, parents and professional who provides educational support services.

Preparing the learner

Participants felt that the learner going to the special school should be prepared for the mainstream.

Educator case 1:

“And then preparing the learner coming from special to mainstream.”

Educator case 3:

“I think they should prepare the child before the child comes here (mainstream school)”

Maybe bring him for a visit

Participants recommended that learners visit the mainstream school prior to placement.

Educator case 1 stated:

“It will help if he could come and visit the school ... like they have orientation.”

Educator case 2 mentioned:

“Maybe bring him for a visit”.

Mother case 3 affirmed:

“Also that the child spends time at the mainstream school. At the school the child will be attending the following year.”

Prepare our learners

Educators felt that it was important to prepare the learners in the mainstream for the learner coming from the special school.

Educator case 1 stated

“We need to prepare our children before the special learners that’s coming in.”

Educator case 2 stated:

“We can also prepare our learners.”

Mother case 3 mentioned:

“Even preparing the children in the mainstream classroom receiving the learner from special (school) to prepare them how to treat the person.”

Preparing all stakeholders is an important part of the inclusion process. Participants suggested preparation of the learner to be included in the mainstream classroom, preparing the learners in the mainstream classroom, and preparation for the educator in the mainstream classroom.

Preparation of the educator included reports from the special school, information about the learner's ability and information about the personal characteristics of a learner that would help the educator. This is consistent with previous research findings (Stough & Douglas, 2003) where educators expressed a need to have knowledge about learner characteristics. Educators concluded that they wanted to know about the personal history of the learner and the overall ability characteristics of the learner. Ability characteristics included knowing about areas of learning difficulty as well as how and under which circumstances the learner learnt best. By having knowledge of the aforementioned information educators would be able to plan more effectively for the learner with special needs. Stough and Douglas (2003) assert that educators have an important role to play in assisting the learner to adjust to the mainstream. Lastly, educators should be knowledgeable, reflective and concerned about the individual learner in order to improve the inclusion of a learner with barriers to learning.

Ecological Systems Theory

Integration of the responses from Section 2 indicates the importance of utilising the ecological systems approach in the integration of a learner to the mainstream. The emergent themes show the importance of linking learning and behaviour of learners to the learning context. Participants recognise the importance of all role players working together. The theme of communication strongly justifies this argument. In order to improve communication, there has to be interaction between the systems that impact on the child (Gugushe, 1999). For the learner coming from the special school great emphasis is placed on support that the special school could have provided to facilitate better integration for the learner. The question is: who should facilitate this interaction - the parent, the educator in the mainstream or the educator at the special school? In all of the cases the parents are highly involved in their child's progress and development. Parental involvement was therefore highlighted as important but was not mentioned as a concern or challenge. Only one educator suggested that the parent be prepared for the child's placement. All of the parents initiated contact with the mainstream schools for the placement of their child. Further the emotional needs of the learners' plays a deciding factor in determining how the learner will adjust to the mainstream (Gugushe, 1999).

It is clear from the findings that barriers to learning may exist at any level of the ecological system. In Samuel's case there were attitudinal and structural barriers, in Sarah's her family sought to eliminate all possible barriers in the system prior to

placement. In Martha's case there were barriers at the mainstream school that affected her emotional well being and there were her own internal barriers that affected her ability to initially adjust to the mainstream.

4.5 Conclusion

The findings highlight the importance of incorporating learners, parents and educators in the inclusion process. The findings also emphasise the importance of the ecological systems approach in achieving successful inclusion. The results show further, how ecological imbalance in the inclusion process can affect the main person in the inclusion process - the learner. In order to maintain balance, communication between all systems is critical.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The findings in this study are in no way generalisable. They must be understood in terms of the participants' subjective views and experiences. Learners' integration into the mainstream showed that the role of the special school is critical in facilitating the transition from the special school to the mainstream school. The special school can improve integration of the learner by improving communication with the mainstream school and preparing the learner for the mainstream.

5.2 Limitations of the study

A qualitative study does not lead to generalisations therefore quantitative data should be obtained to determine common concerns, challenges and support that may be required for learners with physical disabilities.

All of the learners in this study coped well academically. Despite physical disabilities to a lesser or greater extent all of them easily adjusted to the workload of the mainstream school. This is a limitation because educators were exposed to learners who did not

need any accommodations in terms of accessing the curriculum. It would be interesting to see how integration and perhaps inclusion will take place with learners who have learning difficulties as educators will then have to change their teaching strategies and may consequently need support to do so.

A limitation of this study is that the researcher was not able to interview the educators of the special school. Special school educators may have given a different perspective on the integration of the participants. They may have explained the reasons for communication difficulties that were identified by participants of this study.

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendations for future research can be given in terms of each level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model:

At the *microsystem* level, quantitative data regarding learners' views in both the special and mainstream school is urgently needed. Each learner that is transferred from a special school to a mainstream school should be followed-up to get feedback from all role players involved in the inclusion of the learner. By following up these learners, a data base of information can be established to improve the inclusion of learners in the future.

Parent views also form a critical component at the microsystem level. More research is urgently needed to explore inclusion in practice as opposed to theory and policy. Parental and learner views are critical and should be facilitated via both qualitative and quantitative methods.

At the *mesosystem* level, strategies for collaboration between special schools and mainstream schools have to be explored. There is an urgent need to determine the reasons that there is inconsistency regarding liaison between the special and the mainstream school. How can interaction between the two systems become mandatory in practice?

Education support services should be investigated in-depth. It would be interesting to determine whether the role players are aware of the support that can be provided and whether they know what processes they have to follow to receive or request support to improve the inclusion of a learner in the mainstream.

At the *exosystem* level, research on the development and implementation of social policy and the reciprocal influences between policy and practice is needed.

At the *macrosystem* level the understanding of adolescent diversity and barriers to learning should be explored within the context of inclusion.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1



UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 South Africa. Telephone: (021) 959-2283/2453.
Fax: (021) 959-3515. Telex: 52-6661

30 September 2004

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

I am currently supervising Ms J. Dietrich's (2132697) master's thesis. Her topic is: An exploration of the integration of learners with physical disabilities into the mainstream: A case study approach.

Ms Dietrich's proposal is complete and is currently serving at our Faculty Higher Degrees Committee. I therefore would like to request permission for her to conduct her fieldwork with learners who have now been mainstreamed.

Your prompt assistance in this regard is highly appreciated. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.G. Andipatin'.

MS M.G. ANDIPATIN
(Supervisor)

A Place of Quality, A Place to Grow

APPENDIX 2

Navrae
Enquiries Dr RS Cornelissen
Mbuzo
Telefoon
Telephone (021) 467-2286
Ifoni
Faks
Fax (021) 425-7445
Ifekesi
Verwysing
Reference 20041026-0040
ISalathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

IsSebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni



Mrs Janan Dietrich

[REDACTED]

Dear Mrs J. Dietrich

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: AN EXPLORATION OF LEARNERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES INTO THE MAINSTREAM: A CASE STUDY APPROACH.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from 19th January 2005 to 24th March 2005.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2004).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following schools: [REDACTED]
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Education Research
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 29th October 2004

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEBA UBHALE INOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUVO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

APPENDIX 3

Letter of Informed Consent for Parents and Educators and Learners

Informed consent is to be addressed with all of the participants therefore all of them will be required to sign this form. In the case of minors, parents will sign on their behalf however the informed consent of the minors will also be necessary.

I have been explained the aims of the research as well as the research procedures that is being undertaken. I understand that I may ask questions at any point should I not be certain regarding the research aims and/or research procedures. My participation in this study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any point in the process. The researcher has informed me that my participation in this study will be handled confidentially therefore I will be referred to anonymously throughout the research process and particularly in the final report. I will be granted access to the data collection and the final product of this research, should this be my request.

Signature of participant (Mr./Mrs)

Date

Signature of witness (Mr./Mrs.)

Date

Signature of Researcher (Ms. J. Dietrich)

Date

APPENDIX 4

Letter of Informed Consent for Parental Permission

Informed consent is to be addressed with all of the participants therefore all of them will be required to sign this from. In the case of minors, parents will also sign on their behalf.

1. I the parent / guardian of(child’s name)..... have been explained the aims of the research that is being undertaken. I understand that I may ask questions at any point should I not be certain regarding the research procedures.(child’s name)..... ‘s participation in this study is voluntary and he/she has the right to withdraw at any point in the process. I have given the researcher permission to access case history information and school records where necessary, provided that the information obtained is dealt with confidentially.
2. The researcher has informed me that ...child’s name.....’s participation in this study will be handled confidentially therefore he/she will be referred to anonymously throughout the research process and particularly in the final report. I will be granted access to the data collection and the final product of this research, should this be my request.

----- Signature of participant (Mr./Mrs)	----- Date
----- Signature of witness (Mr./Mrs.)	----- Date
----- Signature of Researcher (Ms. J. Dietrich)	----- Date