The Teaching Strategies Employed by Teachers to Support Learners with Learning Difficulties in Mainstream Classes

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AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. During the period of registered study in which this dissertation was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.

2. The material included in this dissertation has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which is now submitted.

3. The dissertation represents my own work and all sources have been acknowledged in a full bibliography.

Anita Campbell
March 2006

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the identification and development
of teaching strategies and the factors that impact on the
strategies when supporting learners with learning
difficulties in mainstream Foundation Phase classes.

The study was carried out by interviewing a focus group
of Foundation Phase teachers from public schools in the
Cape Metropolitan area. The findings from the focus group
discussion was verified and amplified by responses from
Heads of Department, Foundation Phase within the same
area.

The research methodology was that of a two-stepped
investigation. Firstly, a focus group discussion was
conducted using an open ended question framework with the
intent of exploring how mainstream Foundation Phase
teachers develop teaching strategies and what factors
impact on these strategies when supporting learners with
learning difficulties. The data collected was analyzed
and a qualitative questionnaire compiled for Heads of
Department: Foundation Phase to verify and amplify the
data collected during the focus group.

The study indicated that past and recent teacher training
does not equip teachers with the necessary skills to
support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream
classes. The study also found that current workload
levels inhibited further self study.

The research findings contributed to the fund of
knowledge with regard to the training of Foundation Phase
teachers to support all learners, regardless of the
degree of learning difficulty, in mainstream classes in
public schools.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Jeremy Koeberg, my supervisor, who guided and supported me in my research and contributed greatly to the improvement of ideas and the written text.

Thanks are due to the Western Cape Education Department for allowing me to do this investigation and all the teachers who gave of their time and expertise to be an invaluable source of information and encouragement.

Glossary of Abbreviations

<u>Acronym</u>

C2005	Curriculum 2005
COTEP	Committee for Teacher Education Policy
DOE	Department off Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EMDC	Education Management Development Centre
ERS	Educational Renewal Strategy
FP	Foundation Phase
HOD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
INSET	In Service Professional Development
LD	Learning disability
LDA	Learning Disability Association
NCESS	National Committee for Education and Support
NCSNET	National Commission of Special Needs Education and Training
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
RNCS	New Revised Curriculum Statement
OBA	Outcomes Based Assessment
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	Schooling Standards Generating Body
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Personal Experience

In my teaching experience of 24 years and through on-going study in the remedial field, I had to learn how to adapt my teaching to learners with specific learning disabilities such as the hearing impaired learner, mental and physical disabilities, as well as learners experiencing general learning difficulties. The latter group of learners find schoolwork difficult even though they may have the capabilities and the capacity to succeed. It is this latter group of learners that forms the main focus of this study.

In the past, teachers in the advantaged sector of the South African population, i.e. the white population group, could draw on the help of specific discipline specialists such as remedial teachers, speech therapists, psychologists and occupational therapists, to assist them in dealing with most of the learning difficulties. In the post apartheid

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era [1994], the state has opted for the mainstreaming of learners with learning difficulties. The support previously given to learners with learning difficulties during the pre-1994 era by various specialists in their specific disciplines has now been marginalised.

Presently, I find myself being confronted with many different learning difficulties within a single, mainstream classroom. These learning difficulties are not only representative of the traditional learning difficulties, such as visual and auditory perception or reading and mathematical difficulties. Learning difficulties also include learners experiencing social and economic constraints as well as language barriers, to name but a few. Despite my background in remedial training, I am experiencing difficulty developing appropriate teaching strategies to deal with learners with learning difficulties. To what extent are my colleagues and other foundation phase educators experiencing difficulties in identifying learning difficulties and in developing teaching strategies to address learning difficulties within mainstream classes?

1.2 Rationale

With the introduction of White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001), a paradigm shift has taken place in that the support of learners with learning difficulties is now the responsibility of mainstream teachers. The implications of White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) will be discussed in the literature review. It is important to briefly outline the main aspects of White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) as these aspects have relevance to the present experiences of teachers with regard to the support of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream education.

1.2.1 White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training

The Policy of White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) stipulates that with the inclusion of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream education, the focus should be on these learners and the changes that need to take place to accommodate them. Inclusion of learners experiencing different learning difficulties forces teachers to give attention to

overcoming learning difficulties preventing these learners from reaching their full potential. These learning difficulties might be due to problems within the education system, such as large numbers per class, an inflexible curriculum, over-and under-age learners grouped in a single classroom and language barriers, to name but a few. Teachers now have to deal with teaching problems that they did not have to face previously. This complicates the issue of supporting learners with learning difficulties, but including these learners with learning difficulties, also brings other management difficulties into the mainstream classroom.

For the purpose of this study the term learning difficulties will be used. White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) refers to learning needs in order to encapsulate all the different factors contributing to the prevention of learners reaching their full potential.

White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) requires that teachers not only support all learners with different learning needs, but also develop and implement the necessary teaching strategies effectively

against the background of large mainstream classes. Some
questions arise that are of immediate concern. Firstly, to
what degree are educators able to support all learners in
mainstream classes, and secondly, do they have the
necessary skills, knowledge and support to do so?

1.2.2 Management of the Inclusive Classroom

As a Head of Department: Foundation Phase (HOD: FP), part
of my portfolio is to help teachers plan and implement
support programs for learners with learning difficulties. I
have a deep rooted, as well as personal interest in
supporting learners with learning difficulties; not only is
this my field of specialisation, I also had to support my
daughter with her learning difficulties throughout her
school career. I have noticed during my interaction with
various teachers and schools that should teachers compile
support programs, they focus on the obvious problem at hand
and not the source thereof.

I have noted in the continuous discussion within the circle
of my FP colleagues, as well as with parents, that there is
an underlying concern about learner progress within
mainstream classes. Among FP teachers in my department and

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those I met at the Education Management Development Centre (EDMC) network meetings, there is great concern regarding how to plan appropriate and effective support strategies for individual learners. Therefore my personal concerns have now been encapsulated in the research questions that the study will focus on, namely:

- How do educators develop teaching strategies to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes?

- What factors impact on the development of teaching strategies used by educators to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes?

The major effect of the new approach of mainstreaming is that teachers are now responsible to manage and adapt their teaching methods to address the multitude of educational issues raised by having learners with various levels and types of learning difficulties within the same mainstream classroom.

It is stated in White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) that, teachers will be the primary resource to achieve the goal of inclusive education and that staff development at school and district level will be needed to assist. Through personal experience and from talking to fellow teachers, I have gained the impression that up till now, training, either initial teacher training at teacher training facilities or through workshops and courses given by the Department of Education to practitioners in the teaching field, have been superficial and inadequate, further contributing to teachers feeling incapable and insecure within the teaching profession.

Teachers are expected to adapt the curriculum to suit the various needs of different learners. They do the appropriate assessments to determine the level of progress or the lack thereof and plan alternative strategies to accommodate the specific need that manifests, and not the source thereof. Managing a class that has learners with different learning difficulties also involves a great deal of administrative work which is required by the WCED and the school itself. Time to do sufficient planning for diverse learning support is seriously lacking when the full

extent of the curricula workload of teachers is taken into account.

1.2.3 Teachers' Concerns on Learning Difficulties in Mainstream Classes

Foundation Phase teachers voiced their concerns of feeling inexperienced as well as inadequate, or having little practical knowledge about how to identify and assess different learning difficulties. It is my observation after attending training sessions held by the WCED, that the sessions offered are not of a practical and relevant nature. These training sessions or workshops do not seem to empower teachers in the classroom practices and teaching methodologies needed to address the full spectrum of mainstream teaching. Teachers do want to support learners with learning difficulties, but there is a growing concern amongst these teachers that they do not have the necessary skills to do so.

The research study therefore focuses on how best to begin assisting teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary research objectives of this study is to determine:

- The teaching strategies teachers use, to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties in Foundation Phase mainstream classes.

- The factors that impact on the development and implementation of these strategies to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties.

1.4 Delimitation of the Research

The study is delimited to the identification of teaching strategies utilised by foundation phase educators to address the needs of learners in mainstream classes and the factors that impact on the development of such teaching strategies.

1.5 A Review of the Chapters

An overview of the content of this dissertation follows.

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1.5.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and the rationale for this study. The introduction of White Paper 6 and its implications form the gist of the problem this research study begins to address. The rationale and background outlines the difficulties that have emerged for educators in an era of inclusion. The discussion of aspects of White Paper 6 leads to the stated objectives of this study as well as the research questions. The delimitations are outlined before a review of the chapters' are outlined.

1.5.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review follows a historical overview of the educational policy arena in the South African context. The inclusive education debate is central to this discussion. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of the term 'learning disability' and the consequent changes in its conception ranging from learning difficulties to learning barriers etc. The roots from a medical and psychological context to the present inclusive paradigm is followed and elucidated. The review is also reflective of the development of South African teacher education policy since

1994 as well as the development of learning difficulties

and the management thereof in schools. A government

initiated paradigm shift brought about an inclusive

education strategy with Outcomes Based Education as the

vehicle of implementation. A rethink of concepts such as

learning difficulties is discussed, as well as the

adaptation to mainstream schools practicing inclusive

teaching. The attention focuses on the curriculum planning,

assessment and learner development.

1.5.3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The literature review has helped shape the direction of the

research methodology to reflect a qualitative approach.

Motivation is offered for an in-depth focus group interview

with educators and a semi-structured questionnaire for

Heads of Department.

A focus group discussion with teachers from the FP was the

chosen research method to obtain information on the

development of teaching strategies teachers develop to

support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream

classes and the factors that impact on the development of

these strategies. The focus group discussion was followed

with a semi-structured questionnaire directed to Heads of
Departments [HODs]: FP, representative of the teachers who
attended the focus group discussion.

1.5.4 Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

The data captured from the focus group discussion and
responses from the HOD questionnaires, were analysed and
the different contributions as presented, are discussed
under the appropriate response categories. Categories are
e.g. identification of learning difficulties, support for
teachers, workload, teacher training and factors that
impact on the development of teaching strategies.

The responses varied in depth and include the highlighting
of problem areas these teachers are experiencing, such as a
need for practical information, identification and
development of learning strategies to examples of
successful aspects pertaining learner support. It was
endeavoured to find the aspects that are presently the main
areas of concern. The data was analysed collectively of
both the focus group and the HOD respondents' viewpoints to
enable a form of triangulation.

1.5.5 Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

After careful study of all relevant angles which emerged from the analysis of the content of both the focus group discussion and the questionnaires, recommendations are put forward endeavouring to address the shortcomings or the factors which may negatively impact on the teachers when developing teaching strategies to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. The empowerment of teachers with regard to: practical knowledge, addressing their workload, how to improve their plight, attitudes, and to teach pro-actively, forms their recommendations forthcoming from the captured and analysed data.

My conclusions and recommendations, as well as the findings with relation to the literature, concludes this research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter an overview of changes within the South

African Education system since 1994 and key concepts with

regard to learning difficulties is discussed. Developments

in education prior to 1994 and post 1994 follows, looking

at South African initiatives, the SA Bill of Rights and

National Qualifications Framework. Different authorities

were appointed by the government to investigate South

African education and make recommendations.

Outcomes Based Education brought a new dimension to

teaching as is highlighted with the Revised National

Curriculum Statement, White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education

and Training and mainstreaming.

A section on learning difficulties serves to explain the

origins and development of definitions, approaches and the

South African viewpoint with regard to learning

difficulties.

In conclusion the support for learners with learning difficulties is discussed. The task teachers have to support these learners and the absence of teachers having a voice in this new era forms the focus of the study to follow.

2.1.1 An Overview

Since 1994, the South African Education system under a new constitution, moved from special education and mainstream education towards a policy of inclusion of learners with different learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The new constitution is based on the respect of rights with the emphasis on the recognition of diversity of all people.

By implication all learners are entitled to an equal education and an inclusive approach to education was needed. The attainment of such a goal was seen to be possible within one educational system. (Engelbrecht and Green 2001).

The Outcomes Based Education (OBE) approach became the educational vehicle of choice best suited for the inclusion of learners into mainstream classes (Niebuhr: 1996,

Naicker: 1999, Pretorius: 1999, and Engelbrecht and Green: 2001). However, du Toit in Engelbrecht et al (1996) points out that for the OBE approach to be implemented effectively, a process is needed where schools, classrooms and teachers are prepared for the change, as well as given the necessary support.

Many changes since 1994 have come about in the South African Education system to realize the goal of inclusion of learners into mainstream. The literature review focuses on:

- Developments in South African education, prior to and after 1994, with regard to important policies and initiatives that influenced the current education system.

- Inclusive education and mainstreaming of learners previously excluded from the formal education system.

- Learning difficulties and disabilities; the history and varying definitions and interpretations thereof.

- The implication of South African educational initiatives for Foundation Phase teachers.

Changes pertaining to the development of policies and practices will be discussed within a broad chronological framework. Developments in education will be discussed within the framework of those prior and post 1994 that influenced developments.

2.2 Key Concepts

Key concepts that will be prominently discussed within this research study need to be briefly discussed.

2.2.1 Learning Difficulties

No single label can be given to the term learning difficulties. The different changes this term has passed through, both in international and South African contexts will be addressed in this chapter.

2.2.2 Mainstreaming

White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE:2001) states that mainstreaming is a concept that refers to integrating learners to '*fit into*' (2001: 17) a particular kind of system with extra support to these learners. The focus in mainstreaming is thus on the learner. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999) concur in pointing out that the adaptation of the curriculum is not for all the learners, but only the small number who needs assistance and support.

2.2.3 Inclusion

Inclusion is the term used to '*create the conditions for learning and teaching in all our learning institutions so that all learners can be fully accommodated and can flourish*' (Engelbrecht and Green 2001: 30-31). The shift in focus is away from the learner and placed on the education system being able to accommodate the learners with their diverse needs.

2.3 Developments in Education Prior to 1994

The following were early initiatives in South African
Education, all of which played an important role in the
development of South African education redress.

2.3.1 Human Science Research Council

In 1980, the South African government appointed the Human
Sciences Research Council (HRSC), a government research
body, to conduct an investigation into education in South
Africa and to make recommendations for an education policy.
They recommended an educational policy that would *provide
for the manpower requirements of the RSA'* and *'make
available education of the same quality for all population
groups'* (HRSC 1981: 1).

2.3.2 De Lange Report

The De Lange Commission (1980) was appointed by the South
African government to investigate education and to make
recommendations for an education policy. Ahead of its time,
the de Lange Report proposed a more *'comprehensive system
of mass schooling'* with one education department for all

groups and a move away from 'traditional, formal schooling patterns towards a new schooling structure' (Christie 1985: 62). Although 'radicals' (1985: 64) strongly criticized this report it was the most comprehensive investigation into schooling in South Africa since 1949 (Nasson and Samuel: 1990, Christie: 1985).

2.3.3 National Education Policy Investigation Report

Of the first important investigations during the early 1990s into national education was the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). The NEPI project was conducted between December 1991 and August 1992. The National Education Coordinating Committee inspired the NEPI to critically assess policy options in all areas of education in South Africa.

The National Education Department instructed the National Education Policy Investigation and the following five principles guided their investigation namely; non-sexism, non-racism, redress of inequalities, democracy and a unitary system (NEPI: 1992). This report initiated a break with the past education systems.

It was found by the lack of support services in South Africa that the majority of black learners were mainstreamed in ordinary schools regardless of their special needs. Support services however have been well provided for in the minority and advantaged sectors.

2.3.4 Importance of NEPI and Educational Renewed Strategy

Prior to 1994, 'the entire South African education system was organised along racial lines' (Van Wyk and Mothata, in Pretorius, 1999: 1). There has since 1994 come about a shift to address the different learning needs of all learners within the South African Education system.

McKay (1995), a South African educational sociologist, points out that the Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS) published by the State in June 1991 was yet another significant plan outlining the future education policy. This document also proposed that the future education policy no longer be based on race but that a single education system be implemented for the whole country.

The recommendations set out by the NEPI and ERS reports provided an important framework in guiding new policies and change within South African education initiatives.

2.4 Developments in Education after 1994

Since 1994, and following the first democratic elections, a non-racial education system based on equity was instituted. Against the backdrop of 'equity, *access, redress and quality assurance'*, this new education system was formulated and has critical elements for a successful and modern education system (Pretorius 1999: 1).

South African education called for new initiatives and policies to address the need and accommodation of all the learners in the education system. A further discussion on the relevant initiatives and policies that changed the South African education system highlights the steps taken for the redress of previous inequalities.

2.4.1 South African Initiatives

In the transformation era, previously segregated education departments were unified under the National Education

Department. Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001) point out that the South African government, with renewed interest, staged initiatives to examine and organise new policies and legislation to address the immense rate of school drop out, large class sizes, the vast discrepancies in teacher-pupil ratio and the one-third unqualified teaching force.

2.4.1.1 The South African Bill of Rights

The change started with the South African Bill of Rights. The education section which is taken up in the South African Constitution (RSA: 1996a) of The Bill of Rights states that '... *all learners have a right to basic education ...*' (RSA: 1996a: 26). The importance of acknowledging that all learners have the right to a basic education has even further reaching implication for the implementation of Inclusive Education, with the understanding that learners, previously excluded, must be accommodated in mainstream classes (Lomofsky and Lazarus: 2001, Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen: 1996 and Naicker in Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht: 1999).

The South African Bill of Rights underpins the right to equal opportunities and accepting the diverse needs of all

learners to contribute to a just society and equality for
all its inhabitants (RSA: 1996a). With the rights of all
children now under protection, with the inclusion of
children with 'special education needs' seven years of
primary education and a further two years in secondary
schools became compulsory (Lomofsky and Lazarus: 2001).

The National Qualifications Framework set out a national
framework of reference to monitor and lay down basic
national guidelines. These are for the implementation of
the South African Bill of Rights with regard to the
inclusion of learners with education needs.

2.4.1.2 National Qualifications Framework

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was instituted
by the Department of Education (DNE: 1996). The main aim of
the NQF was to shape South Africa's education and training
system for the future. Once again, all learners are
included, as well as those learners with 'special education
needs'. Not only was the intention to eliminate the split
between education and training, but also to prepare
learners for the work force.

The integration of all learners within mainstream also
heralded a move away from a segregated special needs
education system into an integrated system. The aim is one
of special needs and support services, (i.e. school
psychologists, remedial teachers, etc.). The aim is to
shift from special needs and support only being of help to
a certain section of learners and schools, to a unified
general education.

2.4.1.3 National Commission of Special Needs Education and Training and National Committee for Education and Support

In order to put theory into practice, the National
Commission of Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET)
and National Committee for Education and Support (NCESS)
committees were appointed by the President and the Ministry
of Education in 1996 to make recommendations towards a just
educational system.

The NCSNET/ NCESS (1997) points out that historically the
assumption in South Africa was that two distinct categories
of learners were to be found, namely those who form the
majority with *ordinary needs* and learners with *special
needs*, the minority (1997: 11).

Recommendations made by these two committees were largely as a result of the South African Constitution - Bill of Rights (RSA: 1996). The recommendation of both those committees was that the then dual education system changes from a 'special education system' and an 'ordinary education system' to a single education system (Naicker 1999: 12).

2.4.1.4 Outcomes Based Education

To address the needs of all learners within a unified National Education system, dramatic changes were needed. Limited financial resources left South African Education with no choice but to deal with diversity within mainstream education. The introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) became the most influential factor that contributed to educational change in South Africa.

The implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South African schools required, according to Naicker a 're-evaluation in thinking and practices' from teachers in mainstream classrooms (1999: 13). Not only is OBE a radical departure from previous teaching practices but is by its

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very nature inclusive. OBE accommodates learners who experience learning difficulties as well as those learners who are gifted.

Curriculum 2005 became the content and outcomes guidelines for the implementation of OBE in South Africa. With the introduction of Curriculum 2005, teachers in the Foundation Phase (FP) are now expected to contend with different learning styles of learners but also to devise their own curriculum and teaching strategies to support all learners.

2.4.1.5 Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)

The RNCS document endeavours to instruct and guide teachers to a more precise and informed planning of the Foundation Phase Curriculum 2005. During 2003 all Foundation Phase teachers were trained to interpret and implement the RNCS document.

Taking into account the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DNE: 2003), the section on learners with learning difficulties reflects the sentiments of the Bill of Rights. It is clearly stated in the RNCS that '...
teachers need to be aware of the social, emotional,

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physical and other needs of the learners … and make

provision for those when developing Learning Programs'

(RNCS 2003: 7 FP Teachers Guide).

With the introduction of OBE, the policies on inclusive
education and compulsory education, greater demands were
made on schools and teachers. They not only have to meet
and cope with the demand of more learners per class, but
also learners with multiple diverse and special needs to be
supported by developing appropriate teaching strategies.

2.4.1.6 White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training

White Paper 6 states that `classroom educators will be our
primary resources for achieving our goals of an inclusive
education and training system'* (DNE 2001: 18). It is
acknowledged that teachers will need to improve their
skills and knowledge, as well as develop new ones. The
focus of training for teachers will be on `supporting all
learners, educators and the systems as a whole'*, the
`development of good teaching strategies'* and `how to
identify and address barriers to learning'* in mainstream
classes (2001: 19).

2.4.1.7 Mainstreaming and Inclusion

To redress inequalities in the education system, attention must be given to the rich South African heritage and cultural needs of our society. It only stands to reason that this will require teachers with a thorough grounding in multiracial and mainstream education, equipped to address learners needs with 'great linguistic backgrounds, interests, cultural expectations, mother languages and abilities to learn' (Csapo in Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen, 1996: 36). A need does arise to not only consider the practical implications and expectations of mainstream classes, but to understand the philosophy of mainstream education.

Stephens et al., define mainstreaming as 'based on the philosophy of equal educational opportunity that is implemented through individual planning to promote appropriate learning, achievement and social normalization' (1982: 10).

The practical implications of mainstreaming are that teachers must assume new roles and responsibilities to address the needs of all learners. Not only do these ideas

and responsibilities include adjustment of the learning

environment to address the needs of individual learners,

but to also work in collaboration with various role

players. These role players are school principals,

specialists (LSEN – component of psychologists, teachers,

social workers, etc.) and parents. Teachers must

communicate with and involve parents of learners with

learning difficulties in the educational program for their

children.

Within mainstream classes, differentiation is applied to

respond to the needs of learners with learning

difficulties. Table 2.1 compares mainstreaming to

inclusion.

2.4.1.8 Traditional versus Differentiated Mainstream
Classes

It is important to highlight some aspects relevant to the

fact that there is a shift from the traditional classroom

situation to that of the differentiated mainstream

classroom (Tomlinson: 1999).

Table 2.1 Comparison between mainstreaming and inclusion

Mainstreaming	Inclusion
`fit into` (2001:17) into a particular kind of system	Recognising and respecting differences among all learners
or	
Integrating them into this existing system	Build on similarities

Support

Given for some learners to `fit in` a `normal` classroom routine	All learners, educators and the system as a whole to meet the full range of learning needs
Learners are assessed by specific lists, diagnosed, and technical interventions prescribed and placed in programs	Focus on teaching and learners with the emphasis on development of good teaching strategies to benefit all learners

Focus

Is on learners and how changes need to take place to enable learners to be integrated in main-stream classes	On overcoming barriers which prevent learners' full range of learning needs
	On adaptation of and support systems available in the classes

Table 2.2 Traditional versus differentiated mainstream

Traditional	Differentiated Mainstream
Acted on learner is differences	Learner difference is basis for planning
Assessment follows at the end of learning	Assessment is ongoing and diagnostic to a more responsive instruction according to learners' needs
Excellence exists as a single definition	Excellence is defined largely by individual growth from a starting point
Whole class instruction	Instructional arrangement is varied
Instruction driven by text and curriculum guides	Learners readiness, interest and learning profile shape instruction
Single plan assignments	Multiplan assignments
Relative inflexible time	Learners' needs depicts time frame
Teacher directs learner's behaviour	Teacher facilitates learner's skills at becoming more more self-reliant learners
Teacher solves problems	Learners help other learners and teacher to solve problems problems
A single form of assessment is often used	Learners are assessed in multiple ways.

This will enable a clearer understanding of the paradigm shift teachers were required to make, but also to understand the enormity of the current differentiation of teachers' workload when supporting learners with learning

difficulties. Table 2.2 summarizes the differences between traditional and differentiated mainstreaming. Table 2.2 serves not only to point out the wide range of learner support and teaching strategies a teacher in mainstream classes need to adapt to and develop, but also the wider yet more in-depth knowledge base that is required from teachers to comply with the requirements for sufficient learner support.

The focus of mainstreaming and inclusion is on teaching with the emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies to support all learners and on overcoming barriers in the system that might be detrimental to learning (2001: 17). Engelbrecht, et al (1999: 8) caution against inclusive education seen as '*just an ideal state or idea but rather as an unending set of dynamic processes*'.

The discussions on the following terminology must be reviewed against the backdrop of educators inundated with large classes and subsequent administration work, a variety of learners with different learning styles, a strenuous workload in and outside of their classrooms and a questionable knowledge base on learning difficulties.

As previously mentioned, the terminology used within inclusive education is widely discussed by South African educationalists. There is however a lack of literature addressing the support for teachers in how to develop appropriate teaching strategies to address the needs of all learners in a mainstream classroom.

2.5 Learning Difficulties

A discussion on the different interpretations of learning difficulties through the past years, serves as background to learning difficulties as they emerged through the years. This discussion on change with regard to learning difficulties, also serves to highlight the predicament teachers are in when they have to develop teaching strategies for learners with learning difficulties.

2.5.1 Defining the Concept

I will be using the term 'learning difficulties' for the purpose of this study. It is however important to note that the origin and development of a definition pertaining to learning difficulties spans a period from 1930 to the present. I will endeavour to give an overview on the origin

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and development of various definitions of learning difficulties as were formed internationally and nationally.

The history of remedial education support shows various terms to express learning disabilities. Today, still, differing conceptions of the term learning difficulties exist. Terms are used interchangeably, such as learning disabilities, learning difficulties and, barriers to learning. Just as the term '*learning disabilities*' is a broad term that covers many possible causes, symptoms, treatments, and outcomes and that can manifest in so many forms, the term `*learning difficulties*' too has become a broad term. Therefore, in advocating an inclusive education system it is important to provide clear definitions of these terms rather than force various attributes of learning disabilities into a single, comprehensive definition (Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen 1996).

2.5.2 Origins and Development of the Definitions

The problem of defining the concept '*learning difficulties*' is universal (Lerner: 1993) and has changed over time (Archer and Green in Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen 1996). Before 1930, learning difficulties were the subject

of research and support by the medical profession. Medical research focused on the functioning or malfunctioning of the brain. Learners with scholastic difficulties were suspected of having a physical abnormality. Ways of promoting learning were unimportant and phrases often used to describe the learner's condition were `sensory deficit' and /or `mental handicap' (1996: 124).

The research during this particular time was known as the `foundation phase` (Archer and Green in Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen 1996: 124). Intensive medical research on brain functioning and localisation dominated this phase. Learners experiencing learning difficulties were suspected to suffer from physical abnormalities.

From the 1930s to the 1960s, medical and paramedical researchers such as neurologists, psychologists, ophthalmologists, etc studied learning difficulties. Their field of study was the localization of brain functions. Their answer to difficulties was of a medical nature. The assumption was made that learning difficulties lay `somewhere in the brain and its neural pathways' (1996: 124). This was known as the `clinical phase' (Archer and Green in Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen 1996: 124) and

because learning difficulties were viewed as a medical problem, the absence of educationists at large conferences on learning difficulties was noteworthy.

During this period the *medical model* of categorisation endeavoured to identify the learning difficulties in the learner with curative interventions. South African educational views were influenced by the international trends. The American model was dominant during the 1960s.

A new category, namely *learning disability* (LD) (Archer and Green in Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen 1996: 124 and Lerner: 1993) was born at a meeting of concerned parents and educators in Chicago in 1963. Each of these groups identified the children of concern under different terms. These included *perceptually handicapped*, *brain-injured* and *neurologically impaired*. This meeting heralded the birth of the Learning Disability Association (LDA) (Lerner: 1993). South Africa followed the international idea of adopting the category of *learning disability*. This term was a more popular and more acceptable classification than *mentally handicapped* (1996: 124).

Although the term learning disabilities had immediate appeal and acceptance, the task of developing a definition of learning difficulties proved to be a formidable challenge.

2.5.3 Approaches to Learning Difficulties

From the 1980s onwards, the current phase, which is representative of a more balanced approach with regard to the previous ideas on learning difficulties, narrowed the division between specialised and ordinary education. According to Archer and Green a more `balanced approach' is represented to the assessment and description of a learning difficulty than the previous foundation and medical phases (Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen 1996: 125).

Internationally, learning problems are referred to as `learning disabilities' Junkala and Paul (1987), Cruikshank (1987). Lerner and Chen (1992) acknowledge the importance of the condition of learning disabilities as a universal problem that occurs in all countries and cultures of the world. In all cultures there are children who have severe difficulties in learning oral language, reading, writing or doing mathematics despite the fact that they seem to have

normal intelligence. Lerner (1993) points out that the clinical reports on the personal trauma of children from all corners of the world are remarkably similar.

International researchers such as Lerner (1993) and Hewet and Ferness (1984), make the distinction between specific learning disabilities, such as blindness and deafness as opposed to a hidden handicap. Examples of hidden handicaps are visual and auditory perception and perceptual motor skills Cosford (1989: 5) defines two kinds of learning disabilities namely, `specific learning disability (where the child may pass some subjects but fail others) and `general learning disability' (when a child has normal intelligence but finds all school work difficult). According to Collins `normal' is seen as `free from mental or physical disorder' (Lerner and Chen 1992: 574).

Within South Africa, discourses on re-conceptualisation of learning difficulties in the education system must be considered for the impact it has on the relevant support teachers must give to all learners in mainstream classes.

Many teachers received their training in the 1980's and early 1990's before inclusive education became part and

parcel of South African education. Having knowledge about learning difficulties will enable teachers to render the appropriate support to learners with their different learning needs. Considering the continued changes with regard to learning difficulties, the question that once again arises is one of how do educators develop, and what factors impact on the development of teaching strategies to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

2.5.4 The South African Viewpoint

The South African education system has since 1994 gone through rapid changes and interventions to accommodate all learners in mainstream classes and to redress previous inequalities.

The South African viewpoint on supporting learning difficulties has also been instrumental to many rapid changes and interventions, as well as introducing differing concepts of learning difficulties. Once again it must be mentioned that the teachers in mainstream classrooms hail from various training scenarios with regard to learning difficulties. The frustration level I find in teachers and

in myself is one of endeavouring to fully make sense of the importance of all the changes with regard to learning difficulties and the appropriate support programs to be developed.

As previously stated, it was practice for learners to receive appropriate support from specialised teachers, such as remedial teachers. Training during previous years enabled teachers to at least distinguish broadly between learning problems with regard to disabilities, and learning difficulties. Teachers were previously able to refer learners accordingly to the appropriate channel of help.

Within learning difficulties lie two opposing poles. This discussion will serve to point out the wide range of learning needs teachers have to recognise and accommodate in mainstream classes.

2.5.4.1 'Geremdhede' and 'Gestremdhede'

Du Toit (in Kapp: 1991) explains two kinds of disabilities, that of restricting learning ('geremdhede') and a disability ('gestremdheid') (1991: 27). 'Geremdhede' (1991: 27) refers to the situation that comes about due to

specific aspects found outside the learner (such as a lack of stimulation in his/her education, teaching or milieu). These situations lead to the inability for a learner to reach his/her optimal progress. A difference in a learner's progress is found between the reachable or optimal potential and that which he/she has actually attained. No physical, sensory, intellectual or neural shortages are to be found here to be responsible for the learning difficulty. This discrepancy can be reduced by appropriate support from teachers and remedial teachers.

It is important to note the fact that within inclusive education, remedial teachers are no more part of the teaching staff of a school. These teachers now reside under the EMDC (Education Management Development Centers) with new job descriptions to address the large number of learners in need of learning support. According to them, their services are shared between schools with frustrating effects due to their enormous workload of attempting to assist the many teachers and learners who need their expertise.

'Gestremdhede' (1991: 27) is to be seen or found within learners the potential such as sensory, neural,

intellectual or physical variations of development. These
degrees of variations in learner development, complicate
the learner's education and instruction, are permanent and
cannot be lifted. These learners with specific
'*gestremdhede*' usually attended specialised schools but
many of these learners are now eligible to attend ordinary
schools.

2.5.4.2 Barriers to Learning

In White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE:
2001), there is a definite shift towards inclusion of all
learners, which is inclusive of learners who need
specialized education. The terms '*barriers of learning*' and
'*learners with learning needs*' are used throughout this
policy and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS:
2003). Inclusion of all learners in mainstream classes is a
very prominent aspect addressed in White paper 6 (DNE:
2001). I have previously discussed the viewpoint of Archer
and Green that in current South African education, we
experience a more balanced approach in education with the
division between physical and learning problems narrowing
(Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen: 1996). This approach

also necessitates a shift for teachers in their approach to learning difficulties.

2.5.4.3 A Conceptual Shift

White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training reflects the paradigm shift from a medical model to a social model (Lomofsky and Lazarus: 2001).

The division between 'geremdhede' and 'gestremdhede' (difficulties and disabilities) is not always as simple to assess and can overlap in many ways, clouding appropriate intervention and support programs. Meij and Sombolase (1993) focus on the development of a child since birth and conclusions made from their research agree with the viewpoints of Kapp, Deetlefs and Kemp (1994), De Beer (1989) and Grové and Hauptfleisch (1985). This includes the fact that the development of a child's physical and perceptual, cognitive, emotional and social development bears direct influence towards learning difficulties that may be experienced in school.

With the introduction of Inclusive Education, a conceptual shift not only in the definition of learning difficulties

came about, but also in how these learning difficulties should be addressed. The NCSNET/NCESS report (DNE: 1997), Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen (1996) and Engelbrecht and Green (2001) concur in the recognition of a needed re-conceptualisation with regard to learning difficulties.

To address the problems of learning breakdown successfully, a shift in focus is needed towards the *'barriers to learning'* that exists within the inclusive education system. The NCSNET/NCESS report focuses us on the barriers that may lead to breakdown of learning. These barriers can be located *'within the learner him/herself; the centre of learning (schools), the education system and within the broader social, economical and political context'* (DNE 1997: 12).

The importance of correctly identifying learning difficulties directly influences the development of appropriate teaching strategies to support all learners in mainstream classrooms. By implication the lack of appropriate teaching strategies leads to incorrect or no effective teaching support.

2.5.4.4 Identifying Learning Difficulties

According to the New Revised Curriculum Statement (RNCS), participation of all learners in a cultural and educational curriculum must be maximized and barriers to learning uncovered and minimized (DNE RNCS: Grade R-9, 2003).

Therefore a need for more specific information on identifying learning difficulties to empower teachers is strongly motivated by Archer and Green (Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen 1996). They point out that a *'classification system for learning difficulties is useful if an assigned label can point to specific intervention which will facilitate learning, and which would not be appropriate or necessary for all children'* (1996: 126). Cranwell and Muller's (1987) viewpoint is one of learning difficulties being a field where professionals themselves do not use a consistent vocabulary across disciplines. Archer and Green (Engelbrecht et al.) contend that to label a problem, reduces anxiety (1996: 127).

The need for the identification of learning difficulties is one of continued importance to us as mainstream teachers. Not only will this enable us to develop teaching strategies

more correctly for the specific needs of learners, but will also enable teachers to assist learners to reach the learning outcomes as stipulated within Curriculum 2005.

With the implementation of inclusive education, different learning needs are now replacing the original learning difficulties, as was the accepted norm prior to 1994. A brief summary of aspects which are accepted to contribute to the learning needs of learners, are as follows and serves as example of the change in learning difficulties teachers at present must contend with in mainstream classes:

- *Change in terminology: Barriers to learning*
- *Contributing factors towards learning difficulties:*
  - *An inflexible curriculum*
  - *Inappropriate languages, learning and teaching*
  - *Environments which are inaccessible and unsafe*
  - *Support services which are inappropriate and inadequate*
  - *Inadequate policies and guidelines*
  - *Parental non-involvement*
  - *Inadequately and inappropriately trained teachers and education managers* (DNE: 2002: 18).

In reviewing these aspects, the important factor to take

notice of is that learning difficulties are currently

viewed as caused by contributing factors, listed above,

rather than seen as within the learner him-/herself, as the

practice was in previous years. The solution must now be

found within teacher knowledge on the correct

identification of learning difficulties, development of the

teaching strategies and the implementation thereof within a

mainstream class.

2.6 Implications of Initiatives

These initiatives have resulted in teachers having to make

a paradigm shift. Teachers are not only required to adapt

to the new education policies of mainstreaming and

inclusive education, but also as to how they view learning

difficulties.

Since the inception of White Paper 6 of Inclusive Education

and Training (DNE: 2001), teachers are required to comply

with the expectations set out by the education department.

The Foundation Phase teaching force, with collectively many

years of teaching experience, are seldom consulted or

required to render their expertise on how to best solve the implementation of inclusive education and the mainstreaming of learners with learning difficulties. Yet, these are the teachers who must, by the nature of the age groups they teach, be adaptable and creative when it comes to the development of teaching strategies to support all learners.

The literature reviewed for this study, provided adequate information describing the various learning difficulties as well as the reasons for implementation of inclusive education. Gosford 1993, De Beer 1983, Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysens 1996, Green 2001, provided ample information on what learning difficulties are. However, information pertaining to the development of teaching strategies to assist learners with learning difficulties and the implementation thereof by teachers in the field was limited.

Teachers in mainstream classrooms continuously voice the practical problems they experience in the daily run of an ordinary mainstream class. Literature concurs with many of the problem areas they experience.

Thompson (1998) for instance establishes that, although many countries are moving towards and accepting inclusive education as a philosophy, there are many obstacles documented to the implementation thereof. The following factors tabulated by Thompson are problem areas South African teachers too are facing on a daily basis: '_ *large classes, negative attitudes to disability, examine-orientated education system, a lack of support services, rigid teaching methods, assessment dominated by a medical model, a lack of parent involvement, and a lack of clear national policies'* (1998: 11).

Thompson suggests several paradigm shifts are required before the above obstacles can be addressed and for '*inclusive education to advance'* (1998: 12), like

- From a disability concept to the description of the education support needed for these learners. This is in line with White Paper 6 (DNE:2001) prescriptions where teachers should rather find the barrier to learning and not try and diagnose a problem within the learner.

- Teaching methodology must be changed from '...*prescriptive interactive, from undifferentiated to whole class approaches, to a mix of whole class and small class teaching, from an emphasis on competition towards a balance between competition and co-operation*' (1998: 12).

In majority of cases, teachers have to cope with diverse learner needs, with no support for themselves with regard to the development of support teaching strategies or sufficient knowledge about the learning difficulties of the learners in their classes (Lomofsky and Lazarus: 1998). To effectively address all the different learning needs of learners in mainstream classes, teachers are required to be adequately informed or trained to enable them to identify the different learning difficulties, and to address them effectively.

To overcome obstacles that may impact negatively on development of teaching strategies and learner support, it is important to briefly review resources that can be utilized. These resources are not always of a helpful nature, rather of a hindrance as they are time consuming or costly by nature. Teachers need to be heard and consulted

to determine the resource needs and/or the lack thereof, to deliver the requirements as set out by the Department of Education in addressing the different needs of all learners in a mainstream class.

A discussion follows on the resources which are envisaged by the Education Department to be implemented and utilized for a better support strategy of learners with learning difficulties.

2.6.1 Resources

Resources have been discussed under various aspects within literature, namely:

- Collaborative resources.

    This refers to teachers working together with each other within a one-to-one situation, peer groups or language groups. The aim is to develop a pool of knowledge to devise a flexible curriculum suitable for all learners (Engelbrecht and Green: 2001).

- Physical resources.

Kriegler (Engelbrecht et al., 2001) points out resources for special education will be scarce due to a reallocation of funds to address the equitable redistribution of resources.

• Development of teaching strategies as resources.

Swart and Pettiphor (2001: 40) require the 'provision of supplementary aids, assistive devices and support services' for the implication of inclusive education.

Foundation Phase teachers with whom I have had the privilege to work and I question the practicality and the attainment of these requirements and suggestions. Not only do they have to contend with a time factor due to co-curricular responsibilities and the teaching of large and diverse classes which necessitates a great amount of planning and development of teaching strategies, but also of monetary and physical classroom restraints with regard to acquiring books, apparatus, etc.

Teachers are constantly required to change and adapt to new policies and interventions as directed by the Education

Department. The Foundation Phase teachers have done so admirably, but the fact is, that these teachers are seldom consulted on the feasibility or practicality thereof within large mainstream classes. Their expertise may greatly contribute to expedite the attainment of reaching successful goals in learner support in mainstream classes, and minimize the unpractical and unattainable requirements they presently have to contend with in their classes.

This statement may serve as a contradiction to perceptions of, and a reminder to, policy makers and those who must enforce these policies, to realize the potential they have within the teaching force of Foundation Phase expertise. It is however important to once again review what paradigm shift is required of teachers by the Education Department.

2.6.2 Rethinking Learning Difficulties

South African educationist, Fulcher (1989), challenges teachers to rethink their consciousness with regard to disabilities and learning difficulties. The paradigm shift entails that teachers' simplistic explanation for failure and breakdown in learning which is seen to be traditionally caused by deficits within the individual, change. Teachers

need to make a shift from the assumption that a learning

difficulty is shaped by a medical model, which is inclusive

of the identification of learning difficulties through

medical or para-medical model, to a "rights" model.

The rights model expects teachers to identify the barriers

within the education system that leads to a breakdown of

effective learning. The correct identification of these

learning difficulties will lead to the development of

appropriate interventions or teaching support strategies.

(Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive

Education. Second Draft: 2002). The paradigm shift already

came about with the introduction of OBE and inclusive

education. As previously stated concepts and frameworks in

use in the international context largely influenced the

South African education system.

According to Thomson (1998), an American educationist,

there is a growing awareness of the pressure that is put

upon the South African Education system by large numbers of

learners who experience difficulty in accessing our school

curriculum. Pressure and confusion is put on the teaching

force to successfully cope with all these changes

regardless of difficulties originating from medical,

physical, sensory disabilities, educational, social or behavioural problems or from learning problems. I can identify strongly with Thompson's viewpoint in that

'... *the problems facing educational policy makers and teachers alike are those of how best to support such individuals and whether that support should be in mainstream classes or in separate provision'* (1998:2).

2.6.3 Rethinking Education for All

The question that needs to be addressed about inclusive education is one of finding the reasons influencing the management of the effective implementation thereof within mainstream classes.

The previous special education system moved from a segregated education system, where learners with learning disabilities were accommodated in a specialised school, towards a system where the 'special needs' (DNE: 2001) and support services became an integral part of mainstream education (Naicker, Engelbrecht et al., 1997). The expectations of learner support in mainstream classes increased considerably.

It is important to review the aspects crucial to the SA education that needs further scrutiny, due to the fact that these aspects form the corner stones of inclusive education.

2.6.3.1 British Viewpoint

British educationists, Dyson and Forlin (in Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht: 1999) highlight the importance of the Salamanca Statement (Unesco: 1994) in recognizing the right of all learners to learn when defining the scope of inclusion. Not only must schools accommodate *'all learners, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions'*, but also be inclusive of the *'disabled and gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups'* (1999: 32).

2.6.3.2 The American Viewpoint

The focus of the inclusion of these learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms is to comply with the rights model found in our SA Bill of Rights. This holds true of the American view in the description of Stephens, Blackhurst and Magliocca (1982) in describing the philosophy of equal educational opportunity as 'mainstreaming *is a grass root philosophy. It provides the "why" for this social movement*' (1982: 11). Mainstreaming viewed as 'a *philosophy concerned with rights and equal opportunities*' (1982: 11), contributed to the requirement of inclusive education with its problematic implementation for mainstream teachers.

Stephens et al., (1982), Engelbrecht et al., (1997), Archer and Green (2001), as summarising the South African viewpoint, describe mainstreaming as promoting appropriate learning, achievement and social normalization with the focus on the individual learner. By implication mainstream teachers must be able to identify learning difficulties and develop suitable teaching strategies for all these various learning difficulties. The learner stands central in the issue of inclusive education and as such requires the

individual assistance necessary for effective support and subsequent progress.

2.6.3.3 Learner Individuality

The importance of learners' individuality with regard to learning needs and difficulties is accentuated by Tomlison (1999: 24) when the writer points out that *'children already come to us differentiated. It just makes sense that we would differentiate our instruction in response to them'.*

To maximize the potential in each learner, teachers must meet each child's needs at his/her point of known knowledge or achievement. This will ensure substantial growth and progress during each school term and year.

The question to be answered is one of are teachers equipped to identify and support the individuals' needs?

2.6.3.4 The Importance of Early Identification and Intervention

Observation and assessment of learners' development and academic progress are most important. Meij and Sombolase (1993), Kapp (1991) and Grové and Hauptfleisch (1985) repeatedly stress the importance of early detection and intervention as preventative measures.

The viewpoint of early identification and intervention is one of the following principles underpinning the RNCS which is that in OBE an individual learner with learning disabilities needs to:

- be identified as early as possible,

- have a comprehensive assessment, and

- to enjoy an education tailored to his/her needs.

Nursery school teachers, parents, family, doctors and other adults who have dealings with young children can serve as a means in recognizing and identification of learners with learning disabilities.

2.6.3.5 Important Points Pertaining to Learner Support

To be able to help individuals with learning difficulties, the following points become of crucial importance and sum up the concerns of teachers in mainstream classes:

- To have qualified and knowledgeable educators who teach and support the unique needs of learners with learning disabilities.

- To have a modified curriculum and accommodation thereof.

- To pursue activities in areas where they have strengths or interests.

- To develop abilities and skills for transition to independent thinking.

The following aspects associated with Inclusive Education is put forward in White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE:2001) and discussed widely by many South African educationists such as Engelbrecht, P., Naicker,

Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht, L., and Lomofsky and
Archer (Engelbrecht et al., 1999). These aspects need to be
addressed to point out how they impact on and are
influencing the daily teaching of mainstream teachers. It
is with much thought that these aspects are included at
this point of the review and not under the aspects of White
Paper 6. The reason is one of linking the importance of the
terminology on mainstreaming directly to the importance of
learner support.

**2.6.3.6 Support of Learners with Learning Difficulties in
Mainstream Classes**

- It is understood according to the RNCS document (DNE:
  2003) that schools are liable for organizing teaching
  and learning in such a way that all learners can
  achieve the specific outcomes as stipulated by
  National Education Department for each learner to
  achieve within a grade.

- Any barriers to learning and development must be
  identified and understood by teachers. This pertains
  particularly to Foundation Phase teachers, who receive
  these learners at the beginning of their school

career, with very limited or no stimulation of any kind. This will lead to significant and accurate assessment with the needed adaptation or modification of learning experiences by hopefully more relevant teaching methods.

- *Schools must, through changing the school practices, provide an environment that is conducive and supportive of teaching practices and flexible curricula.*

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is stated within the Inclusive Education and Training Draft (2002: 65) that all educators can teach learners. Although some learners need additional support, there is no special pedagogy which is different from good pedagogy for any learner. However, all educators will need new skills in curriculum differentiation, curricular assessment, assessment of potential, collaborative teaching and learning, collaborative planning and sharing, reflection on practices and co-operation.

Training does not always have to happen in formal workshops or through textbooks. Every day teaching situations can also be used to share ideas and to support one another.

White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) is a most important policy introduced by the National Education Department. This policy contains the importance of including learners, not only with different learning styles, but also with a vast array of learning difficulties, all to be accommodated by mainstream teachers.

As mentioned previously in White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) it is stated that teachers will be the main resources of reaching the goals of an inclusive education system. It has also been stated within this policy that teachers require relevant support to attain these goals.

South African Education has since 1994 made positive progress to re-address accessibility in education for all learners. The new policies are positive improvements to our education system, but the implementation thereof is questionable. The realities of the classroom practice with

large numbers, over- and under-aged learners, diversity in language, different socio-emotional and physical barriers all together in various combinations, make it all the more difficult for a simplistic translation from the theory to practice.

It appears that teachers have not been given a voice in this new era. Through this research study, I want to endeavour to provide them with that voice to express their positive or negative challenges they face in implementing the requirements of White Paper 6 in mainstream classes. The absence of this voice can have negative consequences for the successful implementation of the policies advocated in White Paper 6.

Given my involvement with teachers as HOD, past experience as a remedial consultant, and the observation and listening to educators who must implement these policies, I decided on this particular research. The research focuses on the development of teaching strategies and the factors that impact on these strategies used by teachers to address learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

My research aims are of a qualitative nature, in order to

delve to a greater depth in determining to what extent

teachers have adapted in the identification and support of

learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

'Educators have increasingly been marginalized from
the research mainstream, mainly due to the fact that
other players have defined the [school] research
agenda, even though the issues on hand most
immediately and directly affects the school educator…
The marginalization of educators shall continue for so
long as educators have no viable alternatives to the
status quo, and most certainly until educators seek
avenues for self- and collective affirmation of their
own status as bona fide researchers Seepe' (1999: 20).

During the past few years, especially since the inception

of White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE:

2001) with the implication of mainstreaming learners with

learning difficulties, I have made the following

observations.

- Supporting learners with learning difficulties in

   mainstream classes poses a major problem for FP

   teachers.

- Identification of various learning difficulties

   manifested in learners, is the first step in

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addressing the problem of supporting those learners. Teachers are unable to do the relevant identification thus delaying, or implementing incorrect teaching strategies to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

- Teachers in the Foundation Phase (FP) are practically inclined and devise practical strategies to assist their learners.

- Teachers have no voices on how to best support their learners in the class.

FP teaching is practical and it is here in the FP that learners learn mostly by the use of concrete, semi-concrete and only thereafter by abstract application. Teachers accordingly have to adapt their planning of strategies to accommodate the dynamics of the FP learners.

In working closely with FP teachers, I found them to be practical by nature and continuously searching for better teaching strategies to assist all their learners. FP teachers tend to share their teaching experiences with each other. Teachers in FP are finding their teaching strategies

inadequate as more factors impact on the development of these strategies. However, in my review of the literature, very limited contributions from teachers, with regard to the development and implementation of teaching strategies were found.

3.2 Overview of Research

Based on observations I made of FP teachers engaged in supporting learners with learning difficulties, I decided on a focus group discussion involving FP teachers in mainstream classes. A focus group discussion would allow me to delve deeper into the development of teaching strategies, and factors that impact on strategies to support learners with learning difficulties in the light of the continued transformation in education. A quantitative approach would simply quantify/verify the nature of the problem (Morgan: 1997).

This focus group discussion was followed with a questionnaire, directed to the HOD's of the schools represented by the focus group participants. The data retrieved from the focus group discussion and

questionnaires were integrated and presented in a logical
manner.

The research was conducted in two phases, with the *focus
group* forming the first phase, and the questionnaire for
HOD's the second phase. A discussion on these two phases
will serve to address the choice of participants, the
planning and execution of this research within a framework
of confidentiality.

3.3 Phase One: The Focus Group

The intention of using a focus group discussion is to
'*produce data and insights that would be less accessible
without the interaction found in group*' (Morgan: 1997: 2).
I chose the focus group discussion for this study to gather
the data.

This research focuses on the strategies teachers develop,
as well as the factors that impact on these teaching
strategies to address the needs of learners with learning
difficulties in Foundation Phase mainstream classes. The
focus group will be discussed under the relevant headings

which form the important development and execution of this
first phase.

3.3.1 Motivation

Morgan (1997) points out that a focus group has the
dynamics of being an explicit group interaction to produce
relevant data. Research shows that a focus group
discussion can be a dominant form of qualitative data
collection (Morgan: 1997). This approach is of an empirical
nature with the focus provided by the interest of the
researcher and the data by the focus group interaction. A
focus group interaction allows the collection of
qualitative data through participant observation during an
open-ended interview (Morgan: 1997).

It was important for me to use a focus group discussion in
that it allows verbal and self-reported data. The latter
being important to the fact that information was sought
from the FP teachers in the field. Foundation Phase
teachers were the participants in the focus group
discussion.

3.3.2 Research Participants

The choice of FP teachers as participants of the focus group was an important consideration for this research. They are the best equipped to relate experiences and developments within mainstream classes, implementing inclusive teaching and on the relevant policies issued by the Department of Education.

Foundation Phase is the phase where the initial change of the new educational teaching strategy, namely OBE, was implemented and I was part of. Here I experienced the most interaction with teachers within a changing SA education system, discussing the relevant changes and sharing experiences of teaching strategies, curriculum design and learner support in mainstream classes.

The teachers selected for participation in this study were representative of different languages, cultural and economic characteristics of our rich Western Cape education department.

3.3.3 Planning and Execution

Morgan (1997) points out that the rule of thumb to be applied is in choosing a FP group of participants and to allow for free-flowing discussion. The criteria used to identify teachers to be invited to participate in the focus group were as follows.

- Age.

- Educational training.

- Grades in which the teacher taught and is currently teaching.

- In-service training.

- School related information

Bio-data forms were distributed to teachers within Western Cape (Cape Peninsula area) schools, Foundation Phase mainstream, for the identification of participants for the focus group. A sampling was done using the returned bio-

data to avoid a random choice which may have limited shared perspectives. This was to ensure a fair distribution with regard to years of training, age groups, years in experience and representative of Foundation Phase classes.

Twenty teachers were selected as participants in the focus group from schools in the Cape area representative of the different languages, economic, social and cultural backgrounds. These teachers were seen to each bring their own unique experiences to the discussion table. This number allowed a core group of nine to fourteen persons available for the focus group discussion, should participants decide at a later stage to withdraw from participating.

Not with standing the fact of various follow up phone calls, repetitive sending of faxes and letters and the indications of 15 FP teachers attending, nine attended the focus group discussion.

A main advantage of focus group discussions lies in that a large amount of interaction on a topic can be observed in a limited period.

3.3.4 Confidentiality

Focus group interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to enable careful analysis on content. Accordingly to enable this, an informed consent form was set up and given to the participants. All the participants were assured of confidentiality at all times with regard to specific persons and schools. All consented by written consent and signature, to the use of audio recording devices and with the understanding that all information would be treated with confidentiality.

Within the group the participants could experience complete freedom to take turns and make contributions whilst feeling comfortable in doing so. A homogenous group also facilitated the analysis of the data captured, in that different and similar aspects within the group were examined.

Two independent validators, one from a university and the other from a technikon, were invited as observers of the focus group discussion. Their task was to witness and validate the process of gathering the data at the focus group.

Data collected from the FP focus group discussion was recorded, transcribed and analysed. Accordingly the interpretation of these responses enabled me to compile the relevant questionnaire for the Head of Department (HOD) respondents.

3.4 Phase Two: Questionnaire to Heads of Department FP

The HODs FP are the teachers who represent the leadership of Foundation Phase and also supervise FP teachers. These HODs are knowledgeable on different interventions to help learners with learning difficulties and are informed on Western Cape Education Department (WCED) guidelines to give the appropriate guidance and assistance to FP teachers teaching mainstream classes. The aim was to validate the information collected, processed and analysed, from the focus group discussion.

3.4.1 Motivation

The HOD of a school plays an important role in the support of the teachers with regard to curriculum design, teaching strategies, learner and progress assessment. Coming into

contact with different HODs at meetings for the HOD, conversation invariably revolves around the uncertainty of the teachers and HOD alike on the development of relevant teaching strategies to support this wide range of learner difficulties found in an inclusive classroom. The issues discussed regularly are with regard to the interpretation of policies and circulars, development and implementation of teaching strategies to accommodate learners in the big mainstream classrooms as presently experienced.

It was important to include the viewpoints of the HOD on the above-mentioned issues in order to verify the information. A qualitative questionnaire was used to collect this information.

3.4.2 Planning and Execution

The HODs were selected from the schools represented by the participants of the focus group discussion. Letters requesting the participation of the HOD were sent to the principals and HODs of these schools. The relevant questionnaire was included with the request for their participation.

After receiving their responses, it was found that some HODs refrained from responding. Schools within the immediate vicinity of those who declined to participate were contacted and requested to participate. This not only allowed for keeping to the same school environment and composition, but also gave the advantage of a broader response return.

After the data of the focus group discussion was captured, documented and analyzed, certain crucial aspects became obvious. These led to compiling a semi-structured questionnaire to either verify or add to the information gathered from the focus group discussion.

This questionnaire was inclusive of issues raised by the focus group participants for comparison and allowed to delve deeper into new issues raised by them. The following categories were identified and included in the questionnaire for the HOD and open to comment.

The extent teachers are equipped to support learners with learning difficulties with regard to:

- Knowledge and identification of learning difficulties.

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- Development of teaching strategies to accommodate all learners.

- Support for teachers with regard to:
  - LSEN Teachers
  - TST
  - EMDC-LSEN Component
  - NGO's

- Training and Workshops for teachers.

- Teaching strategies used:
  - Where and how are these strategies acquired?
  - Success rate of these teaching strategies

- Factors that impact on the development of teaching strategies and the support for all learners in mainstream classrooms.
  - School readiness
  - Early childhood interventions
  - Grade R learners
  - Parent involvement

o Assessment

o Large class numbers

- Recommendations to improve the support for learners with learning difficulties, as well as for teachers.

- Factors that contribute to the educational process in a classroom.

3.4.3 Confidentiality

All the participants were assured of confidentiality at all times with regard to specific information, persons and schools. An informed consent form was set up and given to the participants to complete.

3.5 Research Protocols

The following protocol was executed.

3.5.1 Letters of Permission

A written request (Appendix A) was made to the WCED for permission to conduct the research within public schools in

the Western Cape and subsequently received. Delimitations to the study included:

- research conducted within the Foundation Phase of Western Cape schools, and

- to enlist the participation of FP teachers as well as the HOD:FP from schools represented by these teachers or schools in their vicinity.

On permission received from the WCED the following steps were taken.

- The permission was requested from the principal of a centrally located school to serve as venue for the focus group discussion. (Appendix B).

- Teachers (FP) were invited to complete the bio-data for possible inclusion in a focus group discussion. (Appendix C).

- The selected teachers were invited to attend the focus group. (Appendix D).

- Two independent validators were requested to oversee the focus group discussion. (Appendix E).

- An exploratory framework was compiled for the focus group discussion. (Appendix F).

- The permission was requested from principals of the various selected schools to allow their teachers and HOD FP the opportunity to partake in the research. (Appendix G).

- On completion of the focus group analysis, a subsequent questionnaire was compiled and dispatched to the HOD: FP for their responses. (Appendix H).

The researcher must adhere to all protocols, but added roles are crucial to the success of the research. The role of facilitator is especially important to focus group discussions.

3.5.2 Research Process

On receiving written consent from WCED to conduct the relevant research in WCED schools, the following aspects of planning were executed in succession.

3.5.2.1 Budget

A budget was compiled to determine the cost of the focus group. Expenses budgeted for were postage and telephone calls, paper, envelopes, printing, services of the two validators, hiring of the venue, refreshments for participants and validators, a contribution to participants travelling costs, the transcribing of the audio tapes, editing, copying and printing of the dissertation.

3.5.2.2 Time Frames, Selections and Letters

A time frame covering both the focus group selection and receiving responses from HOD FP questionnaires, was drawn up to determine the sequence of events and actions required. Aspects addressed were the compiling of the bio-data forms, informed consent forms and letters of invitation to participate; acquiring the venue and

provisional arrangements for an alternative and the loan of two audio recorders (primary and back-up); determining the dates on which to confirm attendance and compiling the programme for the day of the focus group and the arrangement of refreshments.

Actions were executed according to the planned schedule. One aspect incorrectly assessed was the number of follow-up telephone calls that had to be made to confirm participants' attendance. Notwithstanding this, fifteen participants confirmed attendance the evening before but only nine arrived to attend the focus group discussion.

A letter of permission was drafted to principals and a letter to Heads of Department FP. After analysis of the data captured from the focus group, a questionnaire was compiled for the HOD. Questionnaires were posted to the schools of the nine participants who attended the focus group. An additional ten questionnaires were sent to schools bordering those schools that declined to participate. The reason was one of enlisting the input from HODs with a similar language, cultural, and economic background represented in their individual schools. Thirteen responses were received back.

3.6 Framework for Research

The questions prepared for the focus group discussion will be discussed.

3.6.1 Questions Guiding Focus Group

Open-ended questions were formulated to explore aspects pertaining to the development of and the impact different factors may have on teaching strategies for learners with learning difficulties in FP mainstream classes.

These questions enabled the focus group to be directed to cover important topics and issues pertaining to the relevant research questions and objectives. The framework of questions only served as a broad guideline. A flexible approach towards emerging aspects left room to abandon planned aspects of the questions to enable different lines of questioning which seemed to be more revealing, to be followed up.

A basic framework of questions addressed the *following* aspects:

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- The understanding and implementation of White Paper 6 on Education and Training (DNE: 2001).

- The extent teachers are equipped to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

- The support for teachers in mainstream classes in developing teaching strategies to support learners with learning difficulties.

- Information pertaining to support from the TST (Teacher support team), LSEN teacher (Learner support teacher), and EMDC (Educational Management Development Centre) were investigated.

- The factors that impact on the support of the different learning needs of learners in mainstream classes.

- The relevancy of training and the practicality of workshops given to teachers.

- Suggestions the teachers might offer to better the
  development of teaching strategies and the
  implementation thereof.

It was endeavoured to present the questions in an unbiased
way, to be sensitive to possible vocal inclinations, facial
expressions and other non-verbal behaviour. Three of the
participants had to be repeatedly and politely encouraged
to engage in the discussion. In numerous cases the
discussion had to be directed away from three dominant
participants.

Questions were formulated to be of an exploratory nature,
indicative, predictive or of a historical nature. These
categories enabled the focus group to comment on
distinguishing features, weigh issues in relation to each
other, to explain causes and reasons, and evaluate likely
outcomes.

After careful deliberation of the relevant data and
participation of the focus group participants, it was
decided to invite three of the participants back for a
follow-up discussion. This served the purpose to verify
their contributions of the first focus group as correctly

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understood by me and to follow up on data not fully

captured during the transcription.

These are the aspects and questions that were addressed:

- Explanations of the difficulties experienced with

    supporting learners in mainstream classrooms.

- Large numbers of learners per classroom and the

    problems these pose for teachers.

- The type of support that could overcome specific

    problems they experience in their classes.

- How they go about developing teaching strategies to

    support all learners in their classes.

- The extent to which teachers are able to recognise the

    different learning needs of learners.

- The degree of confidence they have in their

    theoretical knowledge of the different learning needs

    and the practical implementation thereof.

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It is important at this stage to point out the importance
of the role a facilitator plays to ensure the success of a
focus group discussion.

3.6.2 Role of the Facilitator

The key role of the facilitator is to conduct the focus
group discussion. As the facilitator, I undertook the
responsibility to establish a constructive focus group
discussion, namely:

- to create a non-threatening, but supportive atmosphere
  for all the participants,

- to encourage all the participants to share their
  views,

- to facilitate interaction among the participants,

- to make probing comments, ask transitional questions
  and make summaries without interfering with the dialog
  between participants, and

- to be non-judgemental in receiving the contributions of the different focus group participants.

With the important role the facilitator plays, the process of the actual *focus group discussion* has relevance.

3.6.3 Structure of the Discussion

After the initial welcome, an icebreaker was planned to create a congenial atmosphere that promoted freedom of expression as the participants would most likely not know each other.

The participants were once again assured of the confidentiality and anonymity in which all information would be treated. Some basic ground rules were set to ensure that each participant had the opportunity and right to be heard in a non-judgemental environment and atmosphere. These rules included the requirement for teachers to not talk amongst each other, but to rather direct their responses one at a time, giving each other the opportunity to be heard. They were also reminded of the importance of each participant's valued contribution, although it may differ with each others' viewpoints. The

participants were requested to firstly mention their non-de-plumes prior to their contribution. This would enable the data to be correctly linked to the specific participant.

I recorded the focus group discussion on audio tapes and made written notes of facial or body language that could indicate participants as agreeing or disagreeing. I also endeavoured to keep track of the rate of participant contribution to subtly try and include the less contributory ones or to follow up on new issues mentioned.

The focus group discussion was limited to one session of three hours with a short interval to stretch their legs. The purpose was to limit outside contact with each other which might have contributed to the process being biased.

All participants were requested in conclusion to voice their personal requests from the WCED. They were asked to comment on support needed and factors to be considered that may contribute to a more enjoyable and successful teaching experience.

The participants, validators and my supervisor were thanked

for their time and valued contributions after which

everyone retired for refreshments before leaving.

3.6.4 Analysis of the Data

A full and accurate transcription of the discussion was

made from the audio recordings.

The process of listening to the audio recording, and

reading the transcripts, gave the opportunity to generate a

list of key words, phrases, ideas and verbatim quotes which

captured the sentiments of the participants. Categories

containing similar ideas were clustered. These themes then

provided the information for compiling the semi-structured

questionnaires for the HOD: FP. These questionnaires were

sent to the HOD FP, connected to the focus group

participants, and additional ten other schools in order to

ensure that a well represented response was obtained on the

issues arising from the focus group discussion.

Due to the fact that three of the participants were Xhosa

speaking, it was found in the transcription of the audio

recordings, that certain questions these participants

responded to, needed to be verified by them and expanded on. These participants were duly contacted on which a suitable date and place for all parties were decided on to do a follow-up discussion.

The questionnaire in totality as sent to the HOD respondents is found in Appendix I, but for the continuation of the research process discussion herewith a summary of the criteria used as framework for the questionnaire.

3.6.5 Framework for Questionnaire

The following aspects formed the main criteria for this questionnaire as compiled for the HOD respondents.

- The extent educators are equipped to support learners with learning difficulties with regard to identification and development of teaching strategies.

- Support for teacher by role players such as ELSEN educators, TST, EMDCs.

- The relevance of training and workshops for teachers in the development of teaching strategies.

- Teaching strategies teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties.

- Successes/shortcomings/needs with regard to aspects such as: school readiness, early childhood development, parent involvement, assessment and big class groups.

- Recommendations the HOD can put forward to enhance the support programmes for teachers and learners.

Following is a background information framework within which the research was conducted and the motivation for the specific questions posed to the focus group.

3.7 Background Information

Background information was briefly summarized to give clarity on the main issues to be addressed in the focus group discussion and to point out why certain areas of information are important for teachers to understand.

3.7.1 White Paper 6

To fully understand that support must be addressed to both
the parties, namely learners and teachers, as stipulated in
the policy, attention needs to be given to the
understanding and expectations implicated by terms such as
inclusion, mainstreaming and curriculum. The opinions and
interpretation of these aspects were of critical importance
to establish the nature of how participants view the term
'support'.

3.7.2. Are Teachers Equipped?

In White Paper 6 the questions are asked 'what can be done
to overcome these barriers and who will assist institutions
in doing it?' (2001: 20). These questions are answered
within this policy, namely to address barriers arising from
the curriculum, the following aspects are important:
flexibility towards learning processes, teaching,
curriculum design, and support for teachers.

The extent to which teachers are equipped to support
learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes

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is by implication crucial in establishing what the abilities of teachers are to identify the different learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. In this category of questions, I intended to explore to what extent teachers are equipped to identify learners with learning difficulties and to accommodate these learners with appropriate teaching strategies.

3.7.3 Support for Teachers

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED), has set structures in place to support both teachers and learners in mainstream classes. Within this category, it was important to find out whom the participants identified as support structures are and to what extent the support was forthcoming to assist them in a mainstream classroom with its problematic dynamics.

Support structures within the WCED were briefly explained according to the different levels and protocol when supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. As such, note must be taken that parents are involved from the onset when a learning difficulty is imminent.

3.7.4 Mainstream Teachers

Mainstream teachers are the first level of support to learners with learning difficulties. By implication, these teachers need to be able to recognize the different learning difficulties and barriers to learning and intervene with appropriate support programs.

These teachers need to assess their teaching strategies and the relevant support given to learners with different needs on an on-going basis. Should the outcomes of these intervention programs be unsuccessful, the second line of intervention is followed in that the learning difficulty is discussed with the respective grade coordinator and teachers within the grade. This discussion should result in further guidance or teaching strategies to serve as an improved program of support which will be implemented by the teacher. Should progress still be illusive, then the next level of support will be from the Teacher Support Team.

3.7.5 Teacher Support Team

A TST committee should function within each school. The members usually consist of teachers with experience and/or a passion and commitment to assist all learners. Their purpose is to direct the best support program for learners experiencing learning difficulties.

3.7.6 Learners with Special Education Needs Teacher

Some schools do have the service of an LSEN teacher who is a member of the district support team. The role of the LSEN teacher is inclusive of guidance to teachers at a specific school on learner support, to help with support material and assessment and to assist with further referral of a learner to different disciplines such as psychological, occupational therapy, etc.

3.7.7 Education Management Development Centre

The EMDC (Educational Management Development Centre) is the structure where the different support disciplines resort under. Their task is one of enormity, due to the fact that many schools in an area, which resort under a specific

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EMDC, need to be serviced. The role of the EMDC is to address specific learning needs, compile support programs, initiate relevant workshops, as well as assess individual learners and/or refer them to counselling or to schools catering for specific learning needs. Their holistic approach includes the input from all parties involved with the learner. Parents also serve as one of the important role players when addressing the needs of learners.

3.7.8 Factors Impacting on Learning Needs

According to White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001), the following aspects as learning needs 'the broad range of learner needs, inclusive of physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual ability, particular life experiences or socio-economic deprivation.' Needs may also arise due to the following:

- *Negative attitudes to and stereotyping of differences.*

- *An inflexible curriculum.*

- *Inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching.*

- *Inappropriate communication.*

- *Inaccessible and unsafe built environments.*

- *Inappropriate and inadequate support services.*

- *Inadequate policies and legislation.*

- *The non-recognition and non-involvement of parents.*

- *Inadequate and inappropriately trained education managers and educators* (2001: 17 and 18).

The longer there is a delay in assisting a learner with learning difficulties, the more the learner is disadvantaged. The child becomes older and his/her confidence decreases. With the decrease in confidence, discipline problems arise and it becomes increasingly more difficult to help the learner.

3.7.8.1 Training and Workshops

The political change in South Africa since 1994 has resulted in that the nature of our schools has changed. Many teachers were trained in previously disadvantaged sectors of teacher training centers. It was important to establish to what extent initial teacher training at the colleges was sufficient to address the problematic issue of inclusive education.

3.7.8.2 Grade R and Parent Involvement

By the very nature of Foundation Phase learners to be of young age, parents and teachers alike are very emotionally involved with the learners. The impact of attending/not attending a Grade R class and the support or lack of parental involvement, needed to be explored in order to determine the consequences thereof.

3.8 Reporting on the Results

There is *'no hard and fast rule when it comes to reporting'* (Morgan 1997: 63). The verbatim transcript of the focus group was manually analysed to interpret the different languages and cultural expressions used. Accordingly I endeavoured to keep a balance between the verbatim statements made by participants and the summarization of the discussions.

In the case of the HOD responses, a majority viewpoint was extracted and formulated from their responses. Where there were vast discrepancies in their answers, it was duly noted.

A detailed discussion follows in Chapter 4.

3.9 Recommendations

A summary was made outlining the most important ideas, conclusions and recommendations suggested. The recommendations are based on the problems teachers are currently experiencing in the development of teaching strategies and the factors that impact on these strategies when supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream FP classes.

A further discussion of recommendations follows in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Data analysis

4.1 Introduction

This research uses two avenues of investigation. The first mode of data collection was in the form of a focus group and the second, a questionnaire to Heads of Department (FP) who respond to questions posed in a questionnaire. Teachers forming the focus group were referred to as participants and the Heads of Department FP as respondents. All the participants and respondents currently teach mainstream classes.

Twenty participants were invited to attend the focus group, 15 confirmed attendance but only nine attended the focus group discussion. Thirteen of the nineteen questionnaires sent out to HOD FP were returned.

A brief overview of the participants and respondents who took part in the study is necessary to establish their contribution in bringing practical and relevant information to the research. Participants and respondents were

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requested to indicate age and experience within year

groupings. The biographical distribution of participants

and respondents' age, experience and educational

qualifications is shown in Table 4.1 below. The collective

group of participants and respondents is well dispersed in

age, teaching experience and level of educational

qualification.

Table 4.1 Biographical Distribution of Participants and
Respondents by Number of Persons.

Age (years)

	21 - 31	32 - 41	42 - 51	52 - 61	61 +
Participants	1	2	4	2	0
Respondents	0	7	2	3	1

Teaching experience (years)

	1 - 5	5- 10	10 - 15	15 - 20	20 - 25	25 - 30	30 +
Participants	2	4	0	1	5	0	1
Respondents	0	1	4	3	1	6	3

Teaching Qualification (level)

	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Higher Degree
Participants	3	5	0	1
Respondents	1	4	1	6

This research focuses on how teachers develop teaching

strategies to address the needs of learners with learning

difficulties as well as the factors that impact on the

development of teaching strategies to improve learning in mainstream classes.

4.1.1. Orientation of Focus Group Participants

To focus the participants on the relevant discussion of development of teaching strategies and the impact these strategies have supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes, I adopted the following procedure.

The significance of a focus group discussion as a research method was briefly explained to the participants. A focus group discussion encourages a teacher to be reflective of his/her own practice in order to enhance the quality of education for him/her and his/her learners. The participants were also reminded that a focus group approaches education as a unified exercise and sees the teacher in his/her class as best judge of his/her total educational experience (Morgan: 1997).

I used as point of departure a short summary of the main aspects in White Paper 6 (DNE: 2001) that has direct relevance to the discussion. The terms 'inclusion' and

'mainstreaming' as a crucial part of this policy, were briefly mentioned as not to influence participants in formulating their own perception about the abovementioned terms.

The participants were requested to give brief statements on terminology used in White Paper 6 (DNE: 2001). I needed to establish to what extent the participants understood the content of the abovementioned policy. Three of the participants ventured an explanation on their understanding of terminology used in this policy document. The opinions voiced, captured the following ideas of the policy, namely that 'inclusion' in mainstream classes is seen to be as non-judgmental, inclusive of all languages and cultures and learners must be supported on his/her own level of achievement and progress. The teacher was seen to fulfil the role of facilitator in the learning process in the inclusive classroom.

I will use the outlines of the questions as was discussed in the previous chapter, to analyse the information elicited from the focus group discussion. The contributions from the participants in the focus group were not always clear or led to new avenues of information as well as

giving insight into their personal feelings on issues. After a careful study of the transcript of the focus group discussion, I decided to contact three of the participants to clarify their responses to certain questions as well as verify from the Afrikaans speaking participants, that translations made by me, were correctly understood and documented. The transcripts were not edited as the participants tended to ramble and return to issues already discussed at a later stage. Accordingly, the transcripts were required to be analysed as a whole.

4.2 Responses

Responses of participants in the focus group as well as those of the HOD FP will be simultaneously analysed to enhance similarities or differences that may surface and contribute to this study.

The transcript for both focus group and follow-up is available from the author, as is, the returned questionnaires from the HOD FP respondents. Participants in the focus group were given nom de plumes and the returned questionnaires from the HOD FP were numbered from 1 to 12 in the order received back.

4.2.1 Initial Responses

As previously mentioned in the section on the outline of questions as discussed within Chapter 3, it was reported that only three participants ventured an explanation on their understanding of terminology used in White Paper 6 with regard to inclusion or inclusive education (DNE: 2001).

Although there was acknowledgement on the part of all the participants on the implications of this policy as set out in White Paper 6, the interpretation and value thereof evoked contradictory responses. Accordingly I deemed it necessary to give all the participants an overview of White Paper 6.

The focus group was reminded that this policy acknowledges that all learners can learn, and require acceptance, respect and support. Learners must be the focus of teachers and teaching strategies and be accommodated in mainstream classes with attention given to the specific needs of each learner.

The inclusion of learners requires that learners with learning difficulties *'fit in'* mainstream classes with the necessary support to *'overcome these learning barriers in the system' (2001: 17)*.

Although only the initial three participants commented on inclusive education as understanding that *'you do not make judgements, teach all languages, all cultures in the same class'*, (Asemahle), *'facilitate'* (Care) and *'you cannot expect a child to be good in everything if he/she is in level 3 but functions on level 1'* (Tilly), the difficulty in the practical application of this policy was repeatedly voiced throughout the focus group discussion.

The policy of inclusive education was found by the participants to have negative consequences for the very same learners with learning difficulties who are most in need of support. The participants were in agreement on the fact that in the past, smaller learner-teacher ratios allowed for learners with learning difficulties to be helped within the structure of a classroom. According to Anny, *'without you even* (having) *with special need education* (training) *that you did not have'* the learners

were able to progress within a normal class, but with less learners per class.

The following categories are responses of the focus group to questions posed to them. Some of the responses evoked emotional responses like unhappiness, frustration or the acknowledgement of their successes.

4.2.2 Emotional Experiences of Teachers

Anny asks the question and qualifies the answer of *'where do we stop'* the process in which the groups of learners experiencing learning difficulties just becomes bigger and bigger because *'they are passed to the next grade'*. Anny, indicated a sense of frustration when she added that the learners too are aware of their *'grouping'* which negatively impacts on their progress. The majority of the participants repeatedly voiced the same frustration.

As teachers in mainstream classes, the participants found mainstreaming to be riddled with practical classroom management problems. Examples mentioned were: Anny, *'big classes that's the problem'*, Dolly, *'we don't have the parent support'*. Many more examples followed, but these

will be addressed within the relevant categories. Care,
'*the schools have not the facilities always to accommodate
certain learners*' (with learning difficulties), in
mainstream classes. According to Care, the Department of
Education does not have the finances to support the
teachers.

Considering the support sponsored as initiatives by the
WCED, these very support structures have to contend with
the problems of too many schools to service in order to
redress the inequalities of our education system. Support
structures include the previous school clinics with their
services of remedial teachers and psychologists. Their
composition is now one of LSEN (Learners with Special
Educational Needs) teachers, language and speech
practitioners, psychologists, social workers and a few
medical doctors.

Care, although she used the term TST as reflective of the
LSEN component of the WCED, found their support lacking in
terms of knowledge of the different learning difficulties
found in mainstream classes and their general availability
in regard to support when it is needed.

The frustration of the group also lay therein that it is an unfair expectation of teachers to cope with this wide range of learning needs in an overfull mainstream classroom. The policy of White Paper 6 on *Inclusive Education and Training* (DNE: 2001), is about `*maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning*' (2001: 16).

4.2.3 Curriculum

As mentioned above, the participants commented on the fact that the curriculum needs to be adapted regularly to accommodate learners with different learning difficulties in mainstream classes. Not only did the group find this time consuming, unnecessary and '*too much*' (Bokkie) paper work, but more importantly, keeping them '*from working with the children*' (Bokkie), especially the learners with learning difficulties.

However one participant, Bokkie, commented that the New Revised Curriculum Statement, offers her the freedom to be innovative and '*not restrictive*' in her approach to teaching strategies.

This comment provided an opportunity to explore to what extent teachers are equipped to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

4.2.4 Ability to Identify Learning Difficulties

Being able to identify different learning difficulties within children evoked a full spectrum of experiences. At the beginning of the discussion, Bokkie already established the fact that teachers are '*not professionally equipped to deal with some of the problems*'.

Participants positively identified the following learning difficulties. Specific examples mentioned by Beth, Anny, Tilly, Care and Bokkie ranged from learners being visually impaired, fetal alcohol syndrome (identified by a medical practitioner), behavioural problems, attention deficit and difficulties due to the influence or lack of parental involvement. Basic remedial related difficulties were also tabled, such as auditory perception, concentration and language barriers. Some of the participants knew the learners had learning difficulties but were unable to identify the precise problems. They were able to describe

the situations or manifestations of problems these learners were experiencing but not the nature of these difficulties. Their vocabulary to describe these learning difficulties was severely limited.

Care explained about a learner who *'has not got the memory'* and according to the *school psychologist* this little learner must *'move through the curriculum'*. Tilly told the group about a learner who found it difficult to understand any form of instruction. It was however discovered by chance that this particular learner had a learning difficulty due to a hearing problem.

Answers to the HOD's questionnaire indicated that they also experienced the negative impact of identifying learning difficulties in mainstream classes. Their comments range from teachers being *'clueless'*, and not possessing enough knowledge of *'deeper'* learning difficulties (more complex and deep-rooted), *'very difficult'* to in general *'fairly equipped'* to a *'certain extent'*, relying on *'own experiences, research and courses'* to *'remedially qualified, knowledgeable and everyone is equipped'*.

An immediate issue that arises from these observations is one of determining who the relevant role players are that are capable of empowering teachers in mainstream classes in the identification of learning difficulties.

Both the participants and the HOD respondents concluded that there are avenues to pursue in search of help in the identification of different learning difficulties found in learners. Help is often requested from the TST (Teacher Support Team) within their own school, the LSEN teacher, (if one is available and allocated to the school), and colleagues. Most of the HOD respondents commented on teachers relying on their own experience or that of a colleague. Mixed feelings were put across when commenting on the value and relevance of in-service training. Two of the respondents however acknowledged that they were put through '*crash courses*'. These courses were not always relevant to the '*reality and actual requirement*' of developing and implementing teaching strategies for learners with learning difficulties. The strengths and weaknesses of help given by various WCED components as well as during their initial training of teachers will be discussed later.

The next avenue was to pursue the extent to which teachers
are equipped to accommodate these learners with relevant
teaching strategies.

4.2.5 Teaching Strategies

The aspect to what extent teachers are equipped to develop
relevant teaching strategies was answered in varying
degrees of interpretations. Accordingly, I had to refer to
the responses made by the HOD FP.

The HOD respondents sketched different scenarios when
commenting on the extent to which teachers are equipped
with regard to teaching strategies used to support learners
with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. It became
clear that although the profile of the participants as
mentioned earlier in this chapter reveal that most of the
participants are seasoned teachers with many years of
experience, the development of teaching strategies to
accommodate learners with learning difficulties raised many
concerns.

The following scenarios emerged from the HOD respondents on
the issue of teachers being equipped with teaching

strategies that would empower them in dealing with learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

- Teachers received, to some extent, workshops and notes from LSEN teachers and school clinics that amounted to '*basic knowledge*'. These '*crash courses*' were seen to be basic and insufficient, lacking in practical application.

- Teachers are also aware of the correct procedures as set out by the Education Department when planning and executing strategies to support learners with learning difficulties. The teacher firstly addresses the problems set in his/her class. Should this intervention be ineffective, then the learning difficulty is discussed in the relevant grade with colleagues, and lastly followed by referring the learner to the TST. Two respondents stated that the teachers who form the TST are ordinary teachers and not always equipped or knowledgeable to deal with all learning difficulties. Assembling a TST was problematic.

• Limiting factors experienced were: time, large numbers
  in a class and increased administrative
  responsibilities relating to the documenting of every
  intervention strategy attempted to help learners.

One HOD respondent described that '*teachers are working
hard to help children with learning difficulties through
extra help but they get despondent by overfull classes and
excessive administration*' (HOD No.8).

Teachers are by implication expected to have knowledge on
occupational and speech therapy, remedial education, etc.
in order to effectively identify and/or support learners
with learning difficulties. Bokkie described the problem
adequately when she reported '*we are not remedial teachers,
we have some knowledge we might have picked up [strategies]
along the way or whatever - we are not occupational
therapists in the specialised way ...*'

Given these scenarios, I focused my concerns on the
different types of strategies teachers develop, determining
how and where teachers get these strategies from and what
are the outcomes of these strategies.

4.2.5.1 Supporting Learners

All the participants related experiences of various
teaching strategies they developed or adopted to support
their learners with learning difficulties in their
mainstream classes. The creative strategies of Foundation
Phase teachers are to be commended. Bokkie sums up many of
the focus group participants' strategies in the following
explanation of the uses of co-operative teaching and
incentives to motivate her learners to the learning
process, *'I take the clever ones and use them to assist me
with the little ones, the others, I make cards and all
sorts of things, give stars and sweets and all sorts of
things I try'*. Many of the strategies were adapted from
unrelated courses, such as music, creating a new teaching
strategy: Anny, *'I went to a lecture last year, it is as
about music___if you bring music into our classes __. Those
kids who can't read and can't do Maths, sing every word of
the songs. Why not use the tools that they have'*.

As stated previously, teachers are by nature emotionally
involved with their learners. Further examples to underline
this strong bond between teachers and their learners is
illustrated by Anny's statement, the *'class is where it*

happens' when she described how she plans interesting

activities for the learners to experience different

learning styles and enjoyment. In the classroom the teacher

facilitates all reading, manages the class, does

observation of learners' progress and *'uses the tools*

learners have' (Anny) to build strategies to support

learners with learning difficulties. Regardless of all the

difficulties the participants experience within the class

situation, what transpired was that these FP teachers

remain motivated regardless and work with the learners.

Care summed this up well in stating, *'find the problem and*

devise individual strategies' to support the learners with

learning difficulties. Teachers have learnt and experienced

the true meaning of management.

Practical strategies that are used in the classes are:

- Let the learners work in pairs or groups with the

  intention of co-operative learning.

- The stronger learners are used to assist the weaker

  ones.

- Adapt courses and ideas to benefit the teaching
  strategies to support learners with learning
  difficulties.

- Drawing on personal experience, as illustrated by
  Bokkie, '… *what did help me, my son had a remedial*
  problem. I was not working. I could not afford the
  money to pay for a remedial teacher. I bought the
  books … I was helping my son. I was helping other
  children'.

- Learn from colleagues, TST, radio, television and
  reading.

The HOD respondents were in agreement on many of the
abovementioned aspects. In addition, they supplemented the
list of practical strategies with the following teaching
strategies used in their respective schools, namely:

- More detail is given to the individual learner in the
  sense of differentiated tasks at the specific
  learner's level of progress.

- Cross-curricular strategies where the learner can function on the level of progress, e.g., should the learners be in Grade 3, he/she works according to the Grade 1 curriculum.

- Small group tuition.

- Extra classes of a 'remedial' nature held after school as the full curriculum does not allow extra lessons during school time.

- Extra work sent home which immediately poses a different problem with regard to parent involvement. This issue will be addressed later.

- Using all the recommendations made by LSEN teacher and the multi-disciplinary teams inclusive of speech and language practitioners, social workers and psychologists.

Only one respondent commented on assessing progress of the learner's abilities and *'getting back to basic teaching methods to support learners'* (HOD No.12).

Once again the following practical and problematic issues of time shortage, full classes and the issue of too much `paper work` (HOD No.2, Bokkie and Angel), were mentioned as having a negative effect on the teaching strategies teachers develop to support learners with learning difficulties.

4.2.5.2 Development of Identification and Support Strategies

This is a problem that has not emerged much in the literature as a topic of discussion. As such it has left the teachers not only to be creative in the development of strategies but also to make their own need for support known.

In general, the participants and the HOD respondents agree on the fact that training institutions give limited training in the identification of learning difficulties and the development of appropriate strategies to support the learners with learning difficulties. In previous years school principals were experienced in identifying learners with learning difficulties and able to take on learners

themselves in groups and help them in problem areas. Unfortunately the role of the school principal has changed from a supportive to a largely administrative one.

Most of the participants and respondents agreed on the expertise and assistance from the older staff members and colleagues to be of important value. Sharing and comparing ideas is an invaluable source in the development of teaching strategies to addresses different learners needs.

Further examples on deriving help to develop teaching strategies are:

- Drawing greatly from own experiences that come about by trial and error.

- Cluster groups consist of teachers who are members of a group linked together by common criteria such as Grade 1, or a Foundation Phase group. Cluster groups get to meet at regular intervals and work according to an agenda of which planning of the new curriculum forms an integral part.

- Co-operative teaching. One participant described her
  positive experience of after self reflection on the
  problem. She says that the teacher herself has to
  '*think of this problem. She* (neighbour) *has taken my
  last group to her classroom, and tomorrow I am going
  to see if there is progress _ problems. I say they
  have problems _ this one has this, that one _
  Sometimes they come out of a problem _ but they are
  moving steadily, moving steadily*' (Tilly).

These Foundation Phase teachers repeatedly reiterated the
importance of the learner as a person when developing
teaching strategies. Not only do these teachers endeavour
to find appropriate teaching strategies to address
learners with learning difficulties but value the child
'in totality'. Illustrations are:

  o Anny: 'make *situations to help the [shy] kid*' and
    '*I live for my class and try lots of things*'.

  o Care: '*Ek wil my kind, elke kind ordentlik leer
    ken. Fisies en emosioneel is vir my belangrik en
    dan kom nog skolasties by. _ dit was vir my
    belangrik en dit het gewerk*'.

o Kotsi: '... *and I also look at the character of*
them [the learners]. I see my children and I want
them to be close to them. I am more than a
teacher, I am their friend, I am mommy to them'.

o Angel: '*Angel just also wanted to become a*
teacher. Then I have and I just said to myself:
"*Here Angel, here you are" As others said it*
(teaching strategies) *comes from past experience.*
You have to learn a lot. My own children always
tell me at home: "are you sure you are always
100% here" we are like that, it's just what's
best for the children ... so it comes with
experience'.

What comes across strongly from the contributions of the
participants was the fact that within every problem
situation they found themselves, their deep-rooted love for
teaching and the importance of each individual learner led
them to, time and again to pursue any possible avenue of
support or idea generating contributions from colleagues,
media as well as internal and external resources. Asemahle
'*I learnt from my experiences and from myself. If I got*

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something in my class, there's difficulty in class, I just go ... and sleep and dream (implying that her sub-conscience mulls over the problem until a solution is reached) *how I can be adjusting to help and the next morning I just try in class myself what I dreamt last night'*. In answer to the question about the success of this practice she replied *'yes - very much so'*.

Although their reservoir of available resources and help are limited and the outcomes of these strategies marginalised, their tenacity to continue developing strategies is most commendable.

4.2.5.3 Outcomes

The outcomes of these strategies as related by the participants of the focus group were, as explained above marginalised by limited resources, training and expertise. Very little information was forthcoming on the outcomes and limited to statements such as:

- *'I do ... don't know if it is right or wrong. I just do something'*

- '*I try different methods ... refer learner to school clinic ... but it takes time*'

- '*Occupational therapy problems ... mothering kicks in*'

It is noticeable that the older members of the focus group discussion constantly refer back to the known practices of teaching of the past that was successful. Expressions such as "*I go back to the old things*' (Angel) and '*drilling*' (Bokkie) must be taken into account when evaluating the limited resources available for teachers to develop strategies to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. This raised the question on the support teachers receive from support structures of the Department of Education and the training and workshop sessions.

4.2.6 Support for Teachers

In discussing the support that teachers receive in developing teaching strategies, it is important to once again consult White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001). This policy states the following: the '*barriers to learning that we (DNE) are drawing attention*

to in this White Paper are being tackled within many other national and provincial programs of the Departments of Education, Health, Welfare and Public Works in particular' (2001: 25).

The Ministry put forward, within this policy a plan for transformation with increased and improved access to the education and training system for all learners. To attain these aims a shift in focus is required. The paradigm shift necessitates that we focus our attention on the following:

- Learners in special schools and settings as well as those who attend remedial or special classes in ordinary schools and settings.

- All efforts on *'improving the capacity of the education and training system to accommodate learners who experience the various forms of learning difficulties'* (2001: 26).

This shift in focus will require transformation and change of the education systems to enable us to accomplish the objectives as well as enable learners with learning difficulties into *'ordinary'* (2001: 26) classes within

mainstream education and address the causes and effects of learning difficulties.

The Ministry believes that in reducing barriers to learning within the education and training, a strengthened education support service will play an important role.

The following aspects will gain significance when one takes note of arguments put forward by both the participants and respondents. Once again it was found that some of the participants used the terms TST and LSEN interchangeably. It also transpired that participants experienced great difficulties in coming to terms with the little or limited support from any educational role player.

The questionnaire for the HOD participants was of a more structured nature which allowed for more specific contributions. The following categories will be discussed accordingly.

4.2.6.1 Learner with Special Education Needs (LSEN) Teachers

The popular method of operation of LSEN teachers within some of the Western Cape schools, is to withdraw groups of learners for extra-help-lessons two periods per week. This is insufficient. Experience has shown that to see significant progress, a daily intervention program is of greater value.

Not all schools have the luxury of such a teacher. In many cases, two schools share a LSEN teacher. For example, one respondent reported 'one *LSEN educator for a school of 1000+ learners shared with another school is futile, especially where socio-economic standards are low. It is a dream that this teacher can support 30+ educators, give support to the learners, prepare programs for individuals, interview parents, and do the admin required'*.

Problems arising from the above practice are that there are too many learners to be helped within the school system and the practice is ineffective. Due to the fact that some schools do not have the service of such a teacher, the

teachers in mainstream are experiencing problems with regard to too little time and too many learners to support.

The misconception of support becomes apparent when two of the focus group participants said that their LSEN teacher is not equipped (fully trained) to help the mainstream teachers. According to them they do not address the actual problem the learner has. The example used by Tilly was: '… *the government needs to see to it, what it is what that teacher is doing there. Maybe sometimes they come – a Grade 3 learner – came from that special class* (LSEN teacher) – *they are doing colour and shapes. Why they are doing Grade 3 colours and shapes. I don't know what's happening'*.

Angel was in agreement and had a similar experience where a Grade 3 learner goes to the LSEN teacher and does Grade 1 work. Anny entered into the discussion putting the intervention program of the LSEN teacher into the correct perspective with '… *if the learner support team or the LSEN Grade 3 child or whatever goes for help – is that not where the level of the child is … isn't that the level where the child is at the moment? … that is where the LSEN teacher should pick up'*.

Consulting the Draft Guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive Education (Second draft) (DNE: 2002) finding the level of a learner's achievement and to build from there is according to LSEN guidelines and White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001).

Schools with smaller learner numbers reported that the support given by the LSEN teacher was of significant help.

4.2.6.2 Teacher Support Team (TST)

As previously mentioned the TST plays an important supporting role for teachers and learners. The members on the TST are more experienced teachers who could rely on their repertoire of teaching strategies. Learning difficulties are discussed and intervention programs and teaching strategies suggested.

On problems regarding the functioning of the TST in schools, the focus group participants voiced their concern as follows.

- The members of the teams are also members of the staff they belong to and do not have the answers to other staff members' problems.

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- It was experienced that TST members are not equipped to render significant help.

- There have been cases where the problem was incorrectly assessed and addressed by TST members. The teachers realized the significance thereof but were themselves unable to correctly develop a support strategy to help the learner.

HOD FP responses were mixed ranging from '*good and always available to give their support*' to the '*TST should play a more supportive role instead of just referring pupils to LSEN*' and '*TST do not have enough knowledge for more difficult learning problems*'.

The TST members were found to not have the required knowledge, support given was not always relevant, practical and pertinent to the particular learners in question. It was acknowledged that these teams are endeavouring to render assistance but certain factors impact negatively on their functioning.

The time factor was mentioned as the main stumbling block when viewed in the light of finding a suitable time for the role players to get together. The busy timetables of schools with their many facetted activities impact negatively on TST meetings.

One of the HOD respondents voiced the frustration of both the TST and teachers in a school where the support of learners are an important and vital part of education. '*The TST consists of educators* (experienced). *They meet, discuss and advise educators but the time factor is once again a handicap. It is impossible to get all the role players together. They also have classes and no special training nor magic wands to solve problems which are created by the system, i.e. too big classes, diversity that cannot be bridged, impossible scaling down of work to accommodate a learner to reach an outcome. Once again on paper wonderful – in reality a disaster – creating frustrated, despondent and inferior learners who become behavioural problems'* (HOD No.5).

4.2.6.3 Education Management Development Centre (EMDC) –
Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) Component

The EMDC – LSEN component consists of a multidisciplinary team made up of psychologists, language practitioners, LSEN teachers, a medical doctor and a social worker. They provide a holistic approach to different learning needs.

Most of the participants acknowledged that this component of the WCED has in many cases been very helpful, but the extent of their help rendered is hampered by their immense workload. They have many schools to service which impacts negatively on their availability.

HOD FP responses ranged from '*Hulle doen hulle bes, maar omdat die skole wat hulle bedien so baie is, neem dit baie lank voor hulp daar is*' (HOD No. 7) through '*We do receive support when requested from EMDC but not always practical and pertinent to that particular learner*' (HOD No. 4) to '*support is good*' (HOD No. 12).

4.2.6.4 Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's)

At grassroots level, some NGOs render valuable input with courses on mathematics and reading. HIV/Aids and the Khanya computer training are some of the courses which some of the participants could recall. It is noted that the NGOs focus on previously disadvantaged schools and render a valuable service. Asemahle saw NGOs as supporters '_ *they also help us. They help us with mathematics and reading. They also help us with teaching, writing and some concrete things'* (HOD No.1).

Although there was a very limited response to this aspect, one respondent provided a different angle to the contribution of NGOs and related that '*money spent on NGOs could be used effectively to put more educators in the schools. Hours and paper are wasted on training sessions. Teachers are tired at the end of a school day – have loads of marking and preparation and their time is often wasted listening to non-sensible, impractical systems that they deem important'* (HOD No.5).

The question that immediately comes to mind was to what extent workshops and initial training equip teachers to

significantly develop teaching strategies to support
learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

4.2.6.5 Workshops

The focus group participants described how unsuccessful and
impractical the contact was with regard to classroom
management. The workshop had the tendency to be repetitive
in information but also lacked depth and insight. The
teachers could attend workshops with the intention to learn
more but `they don't give us the answers'` (Care).

The effectiveness of these courses are questioned when the
participants described the nature of these workshops. The
teachers would be presented with a task that they in turn
had to work on within groups and come to a solution. A
point of contention is the fact that these teachers never
receive any feedback on the tasks done, neither are they
given the `correct'` information. The participants also feel
that those presenting these courses are `unaware of class
situations'` but rather `sit in their offices and work out
plans'` (Anny) which is totally unrelated to mainstream
teaching. `When ideas are forthcoming from the workshop

presenters, they seem to forget that classes are too big to implement "fancy ideas"' (Anny).

The majority of the respondents stated that training and workshops are inadequate in that the required information is not given to teachers. The remaining HOD respondents are all teachers of Grade 1 to 3 classes. Their experiences of the workshops are illustrated in the following statements.

- Information is not applicable. It is sometimes too vague *'you need to help support but not specific like e.g. this game can help with ...'* (HOD No. 1). Information is always *'basic and teachers are requested to supply their own answers. No new knowledge'* (HOD No. 2).

- Presenters. *'They always seem to only admit there is a problem'* (HOD No.4) and *'often a lot of talk and no real support'* (HOD No.5).

Only one respondent was fairly positive about the content of the workshops given to teachers in mainstream classes. *'EMDC staff tried their best with the in-service training and workshops to equip teachers better'* (HOD No. 12), when

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imparting relevant information to the teachers attending.
This specific HOD respondent is part of the Grade R
teachers who are currently receiving intensive and relevant
training from the EMDC, Early Childhood Development subject
advisors.

What is needed is to bring the practical issues together
with the theoretical. The question that arises is one of
the planning and structure of these workshops to fulfil the
teachers' need for relevant support. To reiterate what Care
said and which is a valuable point; loosely translated from
Afrikaans as *inclusive education is law, but teachers are
not equipped sufficiently to comply'*.

If the workshops are inadequate, are the training colleges
addressing the issue of teaching teachers the necessary
teaching strategies to support learners with learning
difficulties?

4.2.6.6 Initial Training at Colleges

The focus group participants at the onset of the focus
group discussion stated the problem relating to initial
training that they are *'not professionally equipped'*

(Bokkie). No training was received in 'assessing the problem well' (Dolly). Added to this concept that seems daunting to the participants is that a teacher is expected to be specialized in many areas of teaching strategies to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. These factors have an effect on the Foundation Phase teachers. These teachers, in the face of adverse conditions, remain creative and continue to devise teaching strategies to support all learners in mainstream classes. 'I … making them feel so good that they lift themselves [the learners] up. It's wonderful. It works' (Anny).

The respondents addressed the issue on initial training more clinically and their collective view was that initial training does not equip teachers sufficiently. The training received was more theoretically orientated with little practical focus. One respondent, in no uncertain terms stated that 'teachers are not trained to cope with the extent of learning difficulties and the subsequent behavioural problems. Their training is too theoretical and lack hands on experience' (HOD No.5).

In reflecting on these answers it becomes clear that the initial training at training institutions does not meet the

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basic need for teachers to learn more about identifying
learning difficulties and developing teaching strategies to
assist their learners in mainstream classes. The concern
that immediately arises is one that the very learners who
need to be supported in mainstream classes are the ones who
do not benefit.

The next aspects addressed were school readiness and under-
aged learners.

4.2.7 Factors Impacting on the Development of Teaching Strategies

Factors that impact on the development of teaching
strategies were found to be within the following aspects.

4.2.7.1 School Readiness and Under-aged Learners

Broadly viewed, the participants and respondents linked
aspects of not being school ready and under-aged, to the
following problems that manifested in the classes.

- Discipline problems, inadequate performance, and difficulty keeping up with the flow of the classroom routine.

- Emotional problems surface when more individual work is expected of learners. The younger learner has the disadvantage to compete with his/her peer group in team sports.

- Too many of the under-aged learners end up with the LSEN teacher due to reading problems.

- Many of the learners are not stimulated and have not had the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills which are much needed for scholastic development.

One respondent described school readiness as *'not always determined by age. Emotionally, ethical and language barriers are rife. The Department of Education promotes mother tongue tuition, but parents have the right to choose. Double standards! Learners lack basic social skills, cannot listen, are in most cases unstimulated regarding, e.g. stories, rhymes, etc.'* (HOD No.5).

Participants and respondents were in agreement that a lack in school readiness impacts greatly on the scholastic development of learners. Parents, although being advised against this step, insist that their under-aged children attend formal school. The impact within class management becomes problematic in the sense that in a single Grade 1 classroom there are learners with many levels of development that each one needs to be supported on his/her own / personal level.

Schools may not administer basic school readiness tests. Many of the respondents felt that school readiness should become compulsory by enforcing all learners to first attend Grade R, i.e., the year before formal school.

4.2.7.2 Grade R

The importance of such a year in the development of learners cannot be stressed enough. According to Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (DNE: 2001) it is stated that:

> 'we define that early childhood development (ECD) as
> an umbrella term that applies to the processes by

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which children from birth to at least nine years grow

and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally,

spiritually, morally and socially' (DNE 2001: 1.3.2).

The policy also states that the target for 2010 is that all
learners who enter Grade 1, should have *'participated in an*
accredited Reception Year program' (DNE: 2001: 1.4.3).

Currently there is a situation of conflicting messages. The
age of learners starting formal school has been lowered.
This has opened the door for parents to rather put their
children in formal school than in a Grade R year.

The importance of a Grade R year to the development of
learners cannot be ignored but should rather be invested
in. The participants commented how learners *'learn through*
play' (Kotsi) has an immediate positive impact which
eliminates potential developmental problems which can lead
to learning difficulties. The view of the majority of the
respondents was that learners who have passed through Grade
R have a distinct advantage over those who did not do Grade
R.

Grade R teachers are well equipped to plan and execute all the developmental activities to enable learners to learn and develop to their full potential. Those of the Grade R teachers who are not fully qualified are receiving training through workshops and find such training most valuable. The importance of Grade R teachers is not always recognized. One only has to listen to their plight as most of the Grade R teachers are not yet on the payroll of the DOE. As a respondent reflected, Grade R teachers are '*financially neglected*' (HOD No.5).

The Grade R teachers should also be trained to identify possible learning difficulties at this early stage of childhood development. If these Grade R teachers were more supported to identify learning difficulties and develop teaching strategies to assist learners with these different needs, the aspect of early childhood interventions becomes more relevant.

4.2.7.3 Early Childhood Interventions

The HOD respondents unanimously supported the idea of early childhood interventions as a preventative measure for learning difficulties. They viewed this aspect to be most

important and visualized the elimination of many learning difficulties. Their views are summarized in the following comment 'It will make learning for children easier later' (HOD No.1).

Some of the respondents wrote about the success experienced within their schools due to the fact that early identification was a priority with the subsequent interventions to follow. These respondents suggest this practice should have priority with all role players such as the DNE, EMDC and school.

To enable these interventions and teaching strategies to be effective, the help of different role players is crucial. The Grade R teachers should have 'access to multi-disciplinary functions such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, language and speech therapists and psychologists' (HOD No.5).

On the negative side, 'wetgewing bemoeilik alles' (HOD No.7). Shortcomings could be found in appropriate school buildings which are ill-equipped for accommodation learners with learning difficulties. Parents are not always aware on

how to stimulate their children and of the importance of Grade R.

The following section will deal more with parental involvement and support or the lack thereof.

4.2.7.4 Parental Involvement and Support

Parents were generally described by the participants and respondents as being '*uninterested*' or '*uninvolved*'. Parents choose to ignore the facts when a learner experiences learning difficulties but rather question the teacher's abilities or blame the school or after care facilities. An interesting aspect that emerged was the statement that parents are scared of their children and are poor primary teachers. Another respondent mentioned the lack of parental skills and that parents shy away from support systems, neither have they the time nor energy to spend on the learning difficulties his/her child may experience.

It is important to note that not one positive attribute of parents was mentioned. No comment was made on how to involve parents with their children's education. It was

though acknowledged that '*you must follow up on parental*

help' (Bokkie) and understand parents' situation – '*the*

whole lifestyle is different' (Bokkie).

The lack of parental involvement and their unrealistic

expectation of teachers and learners is a problem

experienced by most of the participants and respondents.

The aspect of assessment was introduced to the

participants.

4.2.7.5 Assessment

Assessment is seen by the DOE as a valuable tool to plot

the progress of a learner. It enables a teacher to

successfully determine the strengths and weaknesses of

learners and do the correct adaptation of work with the

intention to help the learners to reach outcomes according

to his/her level of achievement.

The participants viewed assessments as an added problem to

their classroom management. To put it mildly, they agreed

on assessment being time-consuming. The preparation of

assessment takes long and reduces contact time. '*It is a*

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struggle' (Kotsi). Angel displayed an attitude of sarcasm when she stated *'we have such a wonderful HOD FP. We just have to do it. We do it'* but continued very enthusiastically; *'I have such a lot of oomph for teaching that I try to see nothing negative in the teaching profession. If I have to do it, I will do it. I won't see it as a negative'*. Dolly viewed assessment as *''n doring in die vlees'* because she does not always feel equipped to do assessments although she attended workshops on assessment.

Although I endeavoured to guide the participants to comment on assessment with regard to identifying learning difficulties and developing relevant teaching strategies to support these learners in mainstream classes, both participants and respondents reverted back to the cumbersome aspects of assessment and viewed it as such.

The majority of the respondents experienced difficulty in doing the assessments whereas some considered it to be a good tool. Words that were used to describe the feelings of negativity towards assessment are: *'the codes are not applicable'* (HOD NO. 2), *'a clearer and stable assessment tool is necessary'* (HOD No. 3), *'time consuming'* (HOD No.

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4), *'difficult to administrate in large classes'* (HOD No. 6) and *'too much admin'* (HOD No.7).

Many of the teachers expressed their shortcomings with regard to the implementation of assessment, regardless of previous workshops attended. Anny asked the question, *'does assessment help me in effective teaching'*? Their concern was for the learners. Assessment took much of their teaching time with ensuing discipline and behavioural problems. Some of the respondents felt that the assessment standards were for the learners who have learning difficulties, which indicated that these teachers do not understand assessment and the spectrum of possibilities it involves.

Mention has often been made of the problem large classes pose. This aspect too needs to be explored.

4.2.7.6 Large Classes

Throughout the focus group discussion the impact of large classes on developing and implementing teaching strategies was mentioned. With larger numbers there are more learning difficulties in a class and all those different needs

cannot effectively be met. Class sizes currently range from 30 to 50+ learners.

The following aspects with regard to the effect of large classes on the teaching strategies for learners, who experience learning difficulties, summarise the arguments advanced by participants.

Time to facilitate and support teaching strategies in mainstream classes is limited due to the large numbers per class.

The effect of class size on the learners is of great concern to the participants and respondents alike. As one respondent aptly explained '*they* [the learners with learning difficulties] *get lost and struggle to keep up. It is easy for them to disappear'* [*in mainstream classes*] (HOD No.1). The effect does not only impact negatively on the scholastic process but also on their social and emotional development. A few of the participants spoke of learners who '*become insecure and inferior – gets lost in the crowd'* (HOD No.5).

Learners experiencing learning difficulties are aware of the fact that they are not progressing with the main core of the class. Their fellow learners too, are aware of the inabilities of these learners with learning difficulties and this brings new dynamics into the class management. Both participants and respondents report that behavioural and discipline problems escalate.

Younger learners, especially those in the FP group, are in constant need of individual attention. Their demand for more attention from the teacher in a big class is not fulfilled. Those with learning difficulties are more at risk in having their basic rights met.

Large classes impact negatively on teachers. With the larger classes, paper work is '*too much*' and '*taking time*' which is unnecessary and '*keeps from working with the children*' (Bokkie). Teachers are feeling guilty and frustrated due to the following factors;

- a shortage of time to support all learners with learning difficulties, and

- the unfair expectations of parents with regard to the progress of their children.

Large classes result in frustration, unhappiness and concern for the learners. This is demonstrated in participants and respondents responses such as, *'very negative'*, *'a lot of failures is the result, practically – learners with learning difficulties should never be in big mainstream classes'*, *'kan nie altyd die nodige aandag gee wat hul probleme betref'*, *'… makes it difficult for teacher to always give her attention to learners with learning difficulties and also other learners in class'* and *'very badly'*.

4.3 Collective Views of Participants and Respondents

To the question in the bio-data for both groups, *'state which factors, if any, are limiting the educational process in your class'*, the majority of the respondents listed the lack of support from parents, half of them listed language barriers, a third that classes were too big and a few socio-economic conditions.

Responses from participants showed that the practical implications were problem areas. The primary areas all relate to training. Arising out of training are terminology with regard to support structures, having difficulty with assessments and the lack of practical experience in managing a large class inclusive of the many facets of learner needs. Secondary areas the changing policies with regard to education, parent involvement and support, lack of resources and the lack of support from the school management.

4.4 Findings

The majority of the participants and respondents believed that **teachers do not have sufficient knowledge** to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. **Initial training was inadequate** with regard to developing teaching strategies to facilitate learning of learners with learning difficulties. A factor which impacted negatively on developing and implementing strategies is the ability to merge the theoretical with the practical knowledge.

Strategies in use are developed **through trial and error** and **passed from one teacher to another** by sharing experiences.

Teachers also use their past **experience** which they adapt, hopefully, to address a problem. TST plays a debatable role.

Workshops and training sessions are not satisfying the teachers need for guidance that is practical and effective. The **workload of LSEN teachers** makes them unable to give teachers the necessary class support.

The main factors impacting on the development of teaching strategies was found to be large classes resulting in very **high workloads**. Factors exacerbating the high workload were the already problematic assessments, the excessive administrative duties and the organisation, the implementation of a new curriculum and the lack of support and understanding from parents.

Conclusions and recommendations will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

> `Education over the last 30 years has been experienced
> by educators as not improved but fallen trap to
> mediocrity creating an environment of frustration, a
> battlefield of conflict, alas, no longer a pleasure. A
> true educator is eager to pass knowledge to his/her
> learners in an environment that is conducive for
> learning. Today is a struggle to survive. Educators
> have no rights only responsibilities. Learners have
> rights and no responsibilities'. (HOD No.5)

This is a statement made by one of the HOD respondents in

response to the request to comment on factors, if any,

which limit the educational process in his/her class.

It is very important to highlight the fact that this

research was built around the contributions of Foundation

Phase teachers. These are teachers who are committed to

their learners and need to be heard because there is a

special bond to be found between a Foundation Phase teacher

and her learners. FP teachers are practical, effective,

resourceful and adaptable and live for their learners.

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These are to my mind qualities that make for the quest to best support all learners entrusted to a teacher's care.

To implement successful inclusive mainstream education, teachers need to adapt their focus. The focus must be on improving the capacity of the education and training system to accommodate learners who experience various forms of learning difficulties.

Recommendations as put forward by participants and validated by the respondents are viewed as contributing to improving education within the FP group. It must be taken into consideration that the points they raise are of their personal experiences within the parameters of their individual classes.

As the teachers in Foundation Phase mainstream classes are the focus of this study, it is important to start discussing the recommendations with their need for greater empowerment with regard to knowledge.

5.2 Empowering Teachers

Teachers' greatest need is for knowledge that can be applied practically in mainstream classes. Not only will this assist these teachers to develop appropriate teaching strategies, but will stimulate their desire for relevant and applicable information.

5.2.1 Initial and On-going Training

Some of the participants reported that, although they are studying further, they experience the content of these courses to be basic classroom management. These courses are not geared to benefit all learners by providing practical knowledge on developing teaching strategies to support learners with learning difficulties. They were questioned on where or how they learn about the development of teaching strategies to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. The participants and respondents reported that they learn from shared experiences of fellow students whilst working out projects given by training institutions. It was clearly stated that they wish to learn through more practical situations and

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workshops rather than being confronted by theoretical
information alone.

The need for practical and more relevant courses was
strongly emphasised by both groups as well as the
requirement for better planned workshops with regard to
information imparted to them. They felt it would be viewed
in a positive light to empower teachers, to include all the
teachers of the various grade groups to attend workshops,
and not only a representative or two per school as is
currently done. The teachers are prepared to attend longer
courses as opposed to 'crash courses' which leaves them
more frustrated than knowledgeable.

5.2.2 Education Management Development Centre (EMDC)
Support

More LSEN teachers for all schools will contribute to the
support and empowerment of teachers in mainstream classes
to identify and develop teaching strategies for learners
with learning difficulties in mainstream classes. The
services of occupational therapists and speech therapists
are much needed, and it should be considered by the

education department to enlist more of these disciplines as members of the EMDC support structures.

Not only will the members of these disciplines add to the assistance of the particular learners who can benefit from their help, but also teachers will greatly benefit from the practical knowledge and inputs. The focus group teachers voiced the need that these members actually come into their classes. In doing so, they will assist teachers identify learners with learning difficulties and suggest strategies to support the learners. This can also be seen as a process of in-service training for the teachers.

5.3 Teacher Workload

Teacher workload was often mentioned by participants and respondents alike. The following aspects relating to workload emerged that teachers need to contend with.

5.3.1 Administration and Assessment

Administration and assessment should be kept to a minimum, so allowing teachers to spend more effective contact time with the learners. Assessment of learners' progress must be

streamlined to an acceptable minimum. Teachers realise the worth of assessments in determining levels of learner progress or lack thereof, but at present find it time-consuming and riddled with masses of administrative paper work expected from the Education Department. Much of the assessment procedures and documentation are often duplicated and presented in different formats.

5.3.2 Class Size and Class Composition

Smaller class numbers will allow teachers to address learning difficulties more effectively resulting in a greater overall success rate of learner progress. Learners will experience the advantage of effective and relevant support to achieve their individual potential. This must be evaluated against the background of large classes, with many learners entering school without or with limited stimulation of any kind.

Learners within a more homogenous level of abilities, development and progress should be grouped together for more intensive and constructive support at all levels of progress. Teachers will be available to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms and

feel more in control than the present situation, which

leaves teachers feeling inadequate and not achieving much

success.

5.3.3 Resources

Requests for improved resources included physical

infrastructure, apparatus and more reading books to be made

available to some schools. Not all the schools that

participated in this research have access to all the basic

resources that enable them to efficiently support learners

with their different needs, neither are the parents in the

financial position to be able to assist.

5.4 Improving the Plight of Teachers

There are various aspects, which can be addressed to make

the daily execution of activities and the general classroom

management more conducive to a positive and supportive

teaching experience. Both the focus group and the

respondents mentioned the following aspects.

5.4.1 Teacher-Parent Co-operation

The teachers clearly established and acknowledged the importance of teacher-parent co-operation. These teachers believe that the parents' involvement with their children and their schooling will result in a positive contribution to learners' achievement and progress. Although the teachers devise different plans to empower the parents of the learners, these are not sufficient to draw all parents to partake and sustain their commitment to the educational progress of their children.

Parents must be encouraged and guided to understand their children's abilities or lack thereof, and to assist in their progress. Their perception of the individual child experiencing learning difficulties as a result of ineffective teaching strategies, or lack of discipline from teachers, must enjoy attention by the appropriate education components. The misunderstanding and perceptions of parents put an unnecessary strain on teachers. This, on many occasions, leads to conflict situations, with the viewpoints of parents being recognised and addressed, but leaving the teachers with no support from the relevant authorities.

A concerted effort must be made to draw parents into the scholastic progress of learners. Parents need to be assisted in acquiring social skills and conducting basic discipline within their family structure. The family is the source of primary education. The teachers expressed understanding of, and compassion for parents who often work under very difficult circumstances, and then to still be confronted with problems concerning their child's scholastic performance. It was recommended that new avenues be researched to assist the parents in helping with guidance on basic family management and responsibilities.

5.4.2 Improve Support from Within the School

School principals and staff can work together to put in place structures that will support teachers within the school.

5.4.2.1 Supportive Attitude

Some of the teachers requested a more supportive attitude from the principal and the rest of the staff in the form of greater direct involvement and interest in their successes

and problems they experience when supporting learners in mainstream classes. Some of the Grade R teachers felt they are only viewed as caregivers and excluded in many of a school's decision-making exercises, inclusive of those that affect them and their learners.

5.4.2.2 Learning Ethos

The experiences recorded of teachers with regard to learner discipline, behaviour, and work ethics are very negative. As previously stated by a respondent that *'learners have rights but no responsibilities and teachers no rights but only responsibilities'* (HOD No.5) learners need to be encouraged to be more involved and show eagerness towards learning. The creation of an attitude of *'eagerness to learn'* (HOD No.4) in learners must be addressed when considering factors which may positively contribute to learning cultures in classes. The responsibility lies within collaborative interaction between parents, teachers, and support components within the education department.

With the unified education system, new and wonderful opportunities opened up for all the learners. A learning culture does not exist fully amongst the learners. Answers

as to how to create a learning culture falls short. How to

motivate learners with regard to the wonderful learning

opportunities that have opened up for them needs further

research and may prove to be of value.

Workshops/courses are required to empower parents in

understanding learning difficulties as well as in giving

appropriate help with homework, are required. A concerted

effort must be made to draw parents into the scholastic

development of their children.

The problematic issue of discipline structures within the

family unit also needs to be addressed. The parents need to

be assisted in conducting basic discipline within their

family structure.

The Education Department and society should collaborate in

finding common ground to assist parents in conducting

discipline within the family unit.

5.5 Pro-active Teaching

I have again realised that an answer to the problem of

supporting all learners lies strongly in pro-active action

rather than curative action. Relevant programs should be compiled for teachers to enable them to understand the complexity of childhood development against the backdrop of the different social, emotional and cultural diversities of South Africa. Learners should rather be guided in the achievement of their own, unique development potential. Curative support programs should be instituted only after it is established that the learners are lacking in certain areas of development. Learners are, after all, the reason for teaching and it stays our responsibility to continue seeking the best support solutions.

5.5.1 Grade R and Under-age Learners

Grade R teachers are the first level in assisting with proactive teaching. They are well equipped to assist with developmental programs for pre-school learners as well as to identify learning difficulties at an early stage of a learner's schooling. Unfortunately very few of these Grade R teachers have the luxury of being employed by the WCED and work for very low salaries.

There is a difference of implementation between White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development Policy (DNE: 2001) and the

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current practice of allowing under-aged learners into Grade 1. White Paper 5 (DNE: 2001) acknowledges '*the importance of investment in early childhood development*' (DNE: 2001: 1.4.1.) as well as the fact that '*the policy priority of this White Paper is the implementation of the pre-school Reception Year (Grade R) for five years old*' (2001: 1.4.1). Participants and respondents felt that policy expressed in White Paper 5 was a sound idea and should be reconsidered.

The change in criteria with regard to the age by which learners may be admitted at an earlier age to Grade 1 has resulted in many of these little learners being entirely without any form of stimulation. It would be advisable to re-instate certain developmental levels that these learners must have achieved before entering Grade 1 that is of a more formal nature.

5.6 Improve Teacher Attitudes and Reduce Frustration

The participants felt that a very unfair burden is being put upon their shoulders with regard to expectations from the Education Department and parents alike.

It became evident during the focus group discussion and when analysing the responses from the HOD FP that these teachers possessed a total commitment and dedication to teaching. These are qualities that are important to teaching and must not be contaminated by unrealistic demands from the Education Department, parents, large classes, limited resources, learners experiencing disciplinary and behavioural problems, as well as learners with learning difficulties. Unpractical workshops that had to be attended must be restructured to provide practical experience and appropriate information.

It was an amazing experience to find these teachers have a tenacity and love for teaching and working with children. No matter how negative the stakes are, they remain creative in thought, practice and remain true to what education is all about. Their loyalty to the learners entrusted to them must be applauded.

In conclusion, my recommendation is that the statement in White Paper 6 that teachers are the primary resource for achieving the goals of inclusive education and training be accepted as true. The time has now come that teachers' voices be heard and recognised and the plea for support be

met by the government, community and parents. They are the driving force securing the future of our wonderful country. The children of South Africa need good, equipped and motivated teachers. Heed should be given to their expertise when planning for the future education of our nation.

5.7 Personal Conclusions and Recommendations

After studying the literature and reviewing the recommendations of the focus group participants and the respondents, I came to the following conclusions.

5.7.1 Practical Knowledge

It is of cardinal importance to provide teachers with more relevant and practical knowledge with regard to the wide range of learning needs that are to be found in a mainstream classroom. Although information does exist in literature, to name but a few examples such as in Engelbrehct et al., (1996), Engelbrecht and Green (2001), Meij and Sombolase (1993), Kapp (1991) and Grové and Hauptfleish (1985), on the identification of, and limited recommendation to address these needs, the practical

implementation thereof within a mainstream class is lacking.

5.7.2 Pro-active versus Curative Interventions

It is important to work pro-actively in supplying teachers with background information and programs on the natural development of learners in order to limit the number of potential learning difficulties arising from poor development.

5.8 Findings in Relation to Literature

My observations and findings in terms of the literature do have relevance.

5.8.1 Learning Difficulties: An Universal Problem

The participants in the focus group, all teachers in the FP, listed having learners in their classes with fetal alcohol syndrome, visual and hearing impairment and intellectual disabilities as well as those who experience barriers such as language and low socio-economic conditions. These teachers are from schools representative

of a variety of cultures and socio-economical levels. This concurs with the viewpoints of Junkala and Paul (1987), Cruickshank (1987) and Learner and Chen (1992) that learning disabilities (difficulties) is a universal problem which occurs in all countries and cultures.

5.8.2 Paradigm Shift

White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training (DNE: 2001) requires teachers to make a paradigm shift to the inclusion of learners, previously marginalised by the education system, into mainstream classes with the necessary support. Fulcher (1987) describes the paradigm shift required from the common explanation for failure in that something is wrong with the individual learners towards the 'understanding underpinned by a rights model' as within the Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education (2002: 17). The rights model rather identifies barriers which may impact negatively on learners' progress than barriers within the learner self.

Considering responses from the focus group participants, the question arises, 'to what extent do teachers accept the paradigm shift to inclusive mainstream teaching, or are

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they grappling with the practical implications of the
implementation of this concept?' The teachers, to the best
of my understanding, accept the rights of learners to a
good education when considering their responses such as:
'non-judgemental', *'getting back to basic teaching methods*
to support learners', *'I live for my class and try lots of*
things', *'Ek wil my kind, elke kind ordentlik leer ken …*
dit was vir my belangrik en dit het gewerk', *'… its just*
what's best for the children … so it comes with
experience'. A question which remains is, "are the rights
of children really protected when they must be supported
within a large class with a teacher who is still grappling
with the basic identification of learning difficulties and
the development of appropriate teaching strategies?"

According to Tomlison (1999) the shift from traditional to
mainstream classroom, focuses on the learner. In rather
using the term differentiated, the author includes all the
factors needed to assist a learner within the mainstream
classrooms such as curriculum planning, assessment,
learner's readiness, teacher facilitation, to name but a
few. Participants voiced these aspects as problems being
experienced by them.

The task of realising the paradigm shift towards inclusive
education is negatively affected by practical problems
these FP teachers experience. Hewitt and Forness (1984)
broached the concerns of teachers about the experience of
implementing mainstream education. I find that Hewitt and
Forness are correct in that teachers bear the primary
burden of mainstreaming with all its implications.

5.8.3 Development of Teaching Strategies

Adler and Reed (2002) pointed out the importance of the
focus on the classroom and school in order for teacher
programs to develop. Van den Berg and Naicker (in
Engelbrecht et al., 1996) requested teachers to re-think
teaching methodologies as a whole and to demonstrate
sensitivity to the ethos within school and classroom. I
observe that the teachers are sensitive, but the practical
implementation of developing teaching strategies to support
learners in mainstream education is not sufficiently
addressed. This concurs with that of Kelly's (1989: 4)
'from the inside' education is not merely a theory but a
practical activity.

5.8.4 Early Detection and Identification

Meij and Sombolase (1993), Kapp (1991) and Grové and Hauptfleisch (1985) stress that early detection and identification followed by intervention is preventative and essential. The participants and respondents, both through their own experiences, come to the same conclusion. Their collective view was that all learners should attend Grade R and all FP teachers be trained to do early identification and implement the appropriate interventions. This aspect is under question when taking in consideration the changes allowed with regard to school going ages over the past two years.

5.8.5 Focus Group Experience

Morgan (1997) was correct in that the focus group did produce insights through interaction within the focus group dynamics. This was made possible by the homogenous group of participants that allowed a thought provoking discussion. Contrary to Morgan (1997), free-flow was limited in that some participants were shy and had to be probed.

5.9 Larger Significance of Results

The information extracted from literature as well as from
both participants and respondents confirmed my concerns
regarding the inadequate support learners with learning
difficulties are receiving in mainstream classes.

5.9.1 Pro-active Interventions

My remedial background and in working with younger learners
reaffirms my belief that proactive teaching is now more
relevant than ever before. Not only do learners start
school with little or no stimulation, but with the deficit
of language barriers, absent parents and barriers within
the environment. Specific programs, inclusive of childhood
development with regard to physical and cognitive
stimulation, must be introduced and followed through at the
relevant places of safekeeping, preschools and Foundation
Phase classes.

5.9.2 Practical Knowledge of Teachers

Teachers must be assisted within their classes with the
relevant help in the identification of learning

difficulties and practically assisted in the development of teaching strategies for the support of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

5.10 Conclusion

My conclusion is that teachers are unable to identify learning difficulties and subsequently devise the necessary teaching strategy. I recommend that teachers be taught how to teach pro-actively and how to identify learning difficulties and design appropriate teaching strategies.

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APPENDIX A. Letter to Western Cape Education Department

Telephone: 021 959-6911

Department of Education
Peninsula Technikon
PO Box 1906
Bellville
7535
19 April 2004

The Director General
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
Cape Town
8000

Sir / Madam,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

I am currently a M.Tech student at the Peninsula Technikon, Bellville. The title of my research is: *"An investigation into teaching strategies employed by educators to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream".*

My research focuses on support learners with learning difficulties receive by educators for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of teaching strategies. A focus group research design will be used to investigate this.

The participants will be educators from WCED schools. The group will be representative of the diverse population groups. The intended discussions will take place during the second term, on a Saturday suitable to all the participants, at a venue at the Peninsula Technikon. The duration of the discussions is expected to be between three and four hours.

I intend to investigate the views and opinions of the participants on various aspects of supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream. The questions will be according to a specific framework, but also open-ended with the intent of exploring possible important issues that may be tabled.

You are kindly requested to consent to this research and to the usage of documented material, issued by the WCED, which may assist me in my research.

Yours faithfully

A.Campbell
Student

APPENDIX B. Letter Requesting a Venue for the Focus Group Discussion.

Telephone: 021 959-6911

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Department of Education
Peninsula Technikon
PO Box 1906
Bellville
7535
17 June 2004

The Principal
Parow West Primary
Ryan Street
Parow
7500

Dear Sir,

**REQUEST TO USE A VENUE AT PAROW WEST PRIMARY FOR A FOCUS GROUP
RESEARCH.**

I am a M.Tech student in the Education Department of the Peninsula Technikon under
supervision of Mr. Jeremy Koeberg. My field of study is to investigate the teaching strategies
employed by educators to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

The intention is to do this study by means of a focus group discussion involving educators from
different schools. It has been established that a venue at Parow West Primary will be convenient
for all participants.

I, hereby kindly request to use the staff room as venue on Saturday, 3 July 2004 from 7:30 till
13:30.

Should my request be successful, I will immediately contact the responsible person to arrange the
details. I will cover any costs incurred.

Your kind consideration would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully

A. Campbell
Student

APPENDIX C. Letter Requesting Participation in the Focus Group Research.

Telephone: 021 959-6911

Department of Education
Peninsula Technikon
PO Box 1906
Bellville
7535

Sir / Madam,

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

According to White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, it is acknowledged that all learners are able to learn and that all children need some measure of support. Whether differences in children are due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV status, etc., support is needed in mainstream and educators are the prime resource in supporting all learners.

I am currently a student at the Peninsula Technikon researching the teaching strategies employed by educators to support learners with learning difficulties. This research has a direct effect on you and your colleagues as you are daily confronted with the implementation of support to learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

You are kindly requested and invited to participate in the selection for a focus group discussion on teaching strategies implemented to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream. Your input would be of great value to my research and the eventually the teaching profession. Your co-operation and contribution to this research is voluntary and will be highly valued. All the information gathered will be treated as highly confidential and in no way will you be identified by person or school in the final report.

You are kindly requested to complete this bio-data form. This information will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and only be used for research purposes.

Your participation and contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

A. Campbell
Student

BIO DATA FORM

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Surname: _____

Name: _____

Home address _____

_____

_____

Please tick the correct box v

1.1. **Your age (years)**

| 21 - 31 | | 32 - 41 | | 42 - 51 | | 52 - 61 | | 61 + | |

1.2. **Your teaching experience in years:**

| 1 - 5 | | 5- 10 | | 10 - 15 | | 15 - 20 | |

| 20 - 25 | | 25 - 30 | | 30 + | |

1.3. **Your teaching experience in years in different grades.**

Grade R [   ]   Grade 3 [   ]   Grade 6 [   ]   Grade 9 [   ]

Grade 1 [   ]   Grade 4 [   ]   Grade 7 [   ]   Grade 10 [   ]

Grade 2 [   ]   Grade 5 [   ]   Grade 8 [   ]

1.4. **The Grade you are currently teaching:** [   ]

1.5. **Your training as educator:**

Teaching qualification(s) : _____

_____

_____

_____

Institute(s) of training attended _____ year _____

and year you qualified	_____	year _____
	_____	year _____
	_____	year _____

In-service training: Please list the courses you have attended:

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D: Letter, Informed Consent and Bio-data Form

Telephone: 021 959-6911

Department of Education
Peninsula Technikon
PO Box 1906
Bellville
7535

Dear Sir / Madam,

RELEVANT INFORMATION, CONSENT REQUEST AND BIO DATA FORMS FOR PROPOSED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Purpose of focus group discussion

It is envisaged that through a focus group interaction, aspects of experiences and perspectives will be accessible as well as reaching consensus and diversity on the support given to learners with learning difficulties in mainstream. A focus group discussion can be seen as a powerful method of bridging the gap between the theory and practice of education.

2. Official approval

The WCED has approved this focus group study.

3. Ethics

3.1. Confidentiality and or anonymity of identity and data will be strictly adhered to. The final product will be made available to the WCED, but in no way will you as person or your school be identified in the report.

3.2. A tape recording of the discussion will be made to ensure that valuable data is not omitted in compiling the final report. Recordings will be kept for a period of five years after the study has been completed for the sole purpose of further study into this particular field. No participant will be identified on the tape recordings.

3.3. As participant your right to withdraw from the research will be ensured. It is kindly requested that should this be necessary, the researcher be notified before 20 June 2004.

4. Form of focus group discussion

4.1. The group will consist of approximately 12 participants. Two independent validators will observe the process.

4.2. Venue: Staffroom, Parow West Primary School, Ryan Street, Parow.

4.3. Date: 3 July 2004
      Time: 9:00 to 12:15

4.4. Agenda

8:30 – 9:00	Arrival of participants Refreshments

9:00 – 9:15	Formal welcome
	   o Explanation of discussion
	   o Formulating ground rules
	   o Purpose of audio tape

9:15 – 10:45	First session
10:45 – 11:00	Refreshments
11:00 – 12:00	Second session
12:00 - 12:10	Appreciation
12:15	Participants depart

4.5. Discussion may include aspects within the following categories.

- school readiness   - inclusive education
- staff development   - OBE
- mainstreaming

I kindly request that you complete both the attached informed consent and bio-data forms and return these to me on or before 20 June 2004.

Your co-operation will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

A. Campbell

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I _____ take note of the relevant information as set out in the letter of informed consent and respond as follows pertaining to the focus group discussion.

Please indicate appropriately with a tick. v

Yes	No	
□	□	I will attend the focus group discussion on 3 July 2004 from 9:00 to 12:15

Yes	No	
□	□	I consent to the use of any information deemed important and understand that all information will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity.

Yes	No	
□	□	I consent to the usage of a tape recorder during the focus group discussion to limit the omission of important information.

I understand that relevant information will be made available to the WCED and Peninsula Education Department and I have no objection to the information being used in any publication of the research.

_____   _____
      Signature   Date

Contact telephone no: (home) _____

                        (work) _____

BIO DATA FORM

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Surname: _____

Name: _____

Home address _____

_____

Please tick the correct box v

1.1. School related information:

Name of the school at which you are currently teaching and address:

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.2. Please indicate your present position at the school

Post level 1	☐	Foundation Phase	☐
Head of department	☐	Intermediary Phase	☐
Deputy Principal	☐	Senior Phase	☐
Principal	☐		

1.3. Information on learners in your classroom:

Total learners in your class _____

How many learners are repeating previous grade? _____

How many learners are receiving a support program? _____

How many learners are receiving help from LSEN Educator? _____

1.4. Learning difficulties in your classroom

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least and 10 the most, indicate in order, the problem areas in your class.

Reading:	_____	Average learner:	_____
Phonics:	_____	Underage learners:	_____
School Readiness:	_____	Illnesses:	_____
Numeracy	_____	Language barriers:	_____
Absenteeism	_____	School and economical	_____

1.5. State which factors, if any, are limiting the educational process in your class:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.6. State what may be contributing factors to enhance the educational process in your class, if any.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your kind co-operation.

Please return the completed informed consent and bio-data forms in the self addressed and stamped envelope.

Telephone: 021 959-6911

Department of Education
Peninsula Technikon
PO Box 1906
Bellville
7535

Dear Sir / Madam,

REQUEST TO ACT AS AN INDEPENDENT VALIDATOR AT A FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH.

I am a M.Tech student at the Peninsula Technikon doing research into the teaching strategies employed by educators to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

A focus group discussion will be conducted at Parow West Primary School, Ryan Street, Parow on 3 July 2004 from 9:00 to between 12:00 and 13:00.

You are kindly requested to act as an independent validator during this focus group discussion. The proposed program for the focus group discussion is as follows:

8:30 – 9:00	Arrival of participants Refreshments

9:00 – 9:15	Formal welcome
	  o Explanation of discussion
	  o Formulating ground rules
	  o Purpose of audio tape

9:15 – 10:45	First session
10:45 – 11:00	Refreshments
11:00 – 12:00	Second session
12:00 - 12:10	Appreciation
12:15	Participants depart

Your participation and contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

A. Campbell
Student

APPENDIX F. Exploratory Framework for the Focus Group Discussion.

The following served as an exploratory framework for facilitating and conducting the focus group discussion.

Exploring participants' knowledge with regard to the content of White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education and Training.

- Inclusivity
- Mainstreaming

Exploring learning difficulties

- Identification of learning difficulties
- Support given to these learning difficulties in mainstream classes
- Sharing of examples

Exploring barriers within the education system
- Language barriers
- Social/emotional barriers
- Big classes
- Resources
- Parent involvement
- School readiness and age restrictions

Exploring strategies to address learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes

- Where do these strategies originate from
- Experiences resulting from these strategies
- Factors impacting successfully/unsuccessfully on the development of these strategies.

Exploring Assessment

- How does assessment influence the support programs
- How does assessment influence the teachers planning of programs

Exploring contributions from participants in the focus group towards making inclusive education a success

APPENDIX G. Letter to School Principals

Telephone: 021 959-6911

Department of Education
Peninsula Technikon
PO Box 1906
Bellville
7535

The Principal

Sir / Madam,

REQUEST FOR YOUR HOD FOUNDATION PHASE TO COMPLETE THE ATTACHED QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a M.Tech student in the Education Department of the Peninsula Technikon under the supervision of Mr. Jeremy Koeberg. My field of study is to investigate the teaching strategies employed by educators to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

According to White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, it is acknowledged that all learners are able to learn and that all children need some measure of support. Whether differences in children are due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV status, etc., support is needed in mainstream and educators are the prime resource in supporting all learners.

As part of this study, I need to involve the HOD of the Foundation Phase from different schools as they and their colleagues are confronted daily with the implementation of support to learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

Their input would be of great value to my research and eventually the teaching profession. Your approval for them to complete the questionnaire will be highly valued.

The WCED has approved this study and the final product will be made available to them. All the information gathered will be treated as highly confidential and in no way will any school, nor participant be identified in the final report or in papers that may arise from out of the report.

Included, please find the relevant bio-data form, questionnaire and self-addressed envelope. Please complete the questionnaire and then insert it in the addressed envelope and post it. Your participation and contribution will benefit the study and is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

A.CAMPBELL

APPENDIX H. Letter, Bio-Data and Questionnaire sent to Respondents

Telephone: 021 959-6911

Department of Education
Peninsula Technikon
PO Box 1906
Bellville
7535

Head of Department: Foundation Phase

Dear Sir / Madam,

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN COMPLETING THE ATTACHED QUESTIONAIRE

According to White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, it is acknowledged that all learners are able to learn and that all children need some measure of support. Whether differences in children are due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV status, etc., support is needed in mainstream and educators are the prime resource in supporting all learners.

I am currently a student at the Peninsula Technikon researching the teaching strategies employed by educators to support learners with learning difficulties. This research has a direct effect on you and your colleagues as you are daily confronted with the implementation of support to learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

I kindly request that you complete the attached questionnaire on teaching strategies you and your colleagues implement at your school to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream.

Your input will be of great value to my research and eventually the teaching profession. Please note that your participation in completing this questionnaire is completely voluntary. The WCED has approved this study and the final product will be made available to them. All the information gathered will be treated as highly confidential and in no way will any school, nor participant be identified in the final report or in any papers that may arise from out of this research.

Attached, please find the relevant bio-data form, questionnaire and self-addressed envelope. You are requested to complete the questionnaire and then insert it in the addressed envelope and post it back to me.

Your participation and co-operation is appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs. A. CAMPBELL

BIO DATA FORM

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Surname: _____   □ Male   □ Female

Name: _____

School address _____

_____

_____

Please tick the correct box v

1.1. Your age (years)

21 - 31	32 - 41	42 - 51	52 - 61	61 +

1.2. Your teaching experience in years:

1 - 5	5- 10	10 - 15	15 - 20

20 - 25	25 - 30	30 +

1.3. Your teaching experience in years in different grades.

Grade R [ ]   Grade 3 [ ]   Grade 6 [ ]   Grade 9 [ ]

Grade 1 [ ]   Grade 4 [ ]   Grade 7 [ ]   Grade 10 [ ]

Grade 2 [ ]   Grade 5 [ ]   Grade 8 [ ]

1.4. The Grade you are currently teaching: [ ]

1.5. Your training as educator:

Teaching qualification(s): _____

_____

_____

_____

Institute(s) of training attended _____ year _____

and year you qualified _____ year _____

_____ year _____

_____ year _____

In-service training: Please list the courses you have attended:

_____

_____

_____

---

2. School related information:

2.1. Learning difficulties in your Foundation Phase classes
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least and 10 the most, indicate in order, the problem areas in your class.

Reading: _____   Average learner: _____
Phonics: _____   Underage learners: _____
School Readiness: _____   Illnesses: _____
Numeracy   _____   Language barriers: _____
Absenteeism (learners) _____   Barriers (economical, social) _____

2.2. State which factors, if any, are limiting the educational process in your classes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.3. State what factors may contribute to the educational process in your classes, if any. Please feel free to add extra pages if required.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HOD (FP)

<u>Preamble</u>: According to White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, it is acknowledged that all learners are able to learn and that all children need some measure of support. Whether differences in children are due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV status, etc., support is needed in mainstream and educators are the prime resource in supporting all learners.

Please comment on the following.

---

1. To what extent are educators equipped to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes with regard to:

1.1 Knowledge on identifying learning difficulties

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.2 Teaching strategies to accommodate these learners with learning difficulties.

_____

_____

_____

---

2. Please comment on <u>support for educators</u> accommodating learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes

2.1 Support given by LSEN educator

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.2 Support given by TST (Teacher support team)

_____

_____

_____

2.3 EMDC of own region, e.g. LSEN component, subject advisor.

_____

_____

_____
_____

2.4 If any, which other parties are responsible, e.g. NGO's, in support for teachers and what is the value thereof?

_____
_____
_____

3. Please comment on <u>training and workshops given to educators</u> in order to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes

3.1. To what extent did in-service training or workshops give teachers the necessary help to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes?

_____
_____
_____

3.2. To what extent did initial training at training colleges equip teachers to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes?

_____
_____
_____

4. Please comment on <u>teaching strategies</u> (methods) teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

4.1. What type of teaching strategies do they use?

_____
_____

4.2. How and from where did teachers acquire these teaching strategies?

_____
_____
_____

4.3. What are the outcomes of these teaching strategies?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Please comment on successes / shortcomings / needs with regard to the following aspects in support of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes

5.1. School readiness

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.2. Early childhood interventions

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.3. Grade R learners / Grade R teachers

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.4. Parent involvement and support

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.5. Assessment

_____
_____
_____

5.6. How do big classes influence the outcomes of mainstream learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes?

_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

6. What recommendations would you as HOD of the Foundation Phase like to put forward to support your staff in their task of supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classes.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your co-operation

UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

Department of Psychology
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa, Telephone: (021) 959-3091
Fax: (021) 959-3515

18 May 2005

Mr. J. Koeberg
CPUT – Bellville Campus
Bellville
7535

Dear Mr. Koeberg

Data collection process moderation: Student – Anita Campbell

This serves to confirm that the undersigned have acted as external process moderators (on 18 May 2005) during the data collection phase of the above mentioned MTech student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Focus group discussion were used as data collection technique.

It gives us great pleasure to report as follows on the process:
1. Focus group questions: A sufficient number of questions were developed which were closely related to the research focus and aim. Question format (open ended in nature) allowed for rich responses from participants. The quality of the question protocol required little probing by the facilitator.
2. Focus group facilitation: The student facilitated the discussion with guidance from the research (thesis) supervisor. The student created an environment in which participants could express themselves and allowed for a free flow of information. As a junior researcher, the student did occasionally experience slight difficulty with getting participants to focus on the topic area under discussion. This did, however not affect the quality of information collected.
3. The student was well-informed about focus group discussions as data collect technique. It was evident that the student had done a fair amount of theoretical research on this.
4. Adequate attention was given to ethical considerations.

It is our opinion that the technique used, was of a high quality and that at no stage during the process was the integrity of data collected in any way compromised.

Joachim J. Jacobs
Lecturer
Division for Research Psychology

V.C. Bosman
Lecturer
CPUT (Bellville Campus)