



Cape Peninsula  
University of Technology

**The nature of learning support in rural schools**

**by**

**John-Frederich Swart**

**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**M.Ed.**

**in the Faculty of Education and Social Science**

**at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

**Supervisor:** Dr M.A. Van der Westhuizen

**Wellington campus**

August 2016

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## DECLARATION

I, John-Frederich Swart, declare that the contents of this dissertation, “the nature of learning support in rural schools”, represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. I declare that all sources are referred to by means of in-text references and a reference list.

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## ABSTRACT

The focus of this research study is on learning support to learners in rural schools as experienced by learning support professionals and teachers in order to identify best-practices and the obstacles experienced in this regard. It was envisaged that continuous exploration of current practices could assist in identifying ways to support the development of inclusive education. The research questions to address this aspect were: *What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by teachers?* and *What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by learning support professionals?* The aim of this study was therefore *to explore and describe the nature of learning support in rural schools, in order to make some recommendations to learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools.* The research study was conducted from a qualitative approach, utilising explorative, descriptive and contextual research designs. Purposive sampling was employed and data saturation determined the sample size. The findings were based on a structured analysis framework. Ethical aspects included informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

My Heavenly Father  
Dr. M.A. van der Westhuizen  
Prof. Rajendra Chetty  
My parents, Johnico and Karen Swart  
The Western Cape Education Department  
The Cape Winelands Education District  
Me. Lameze Karriem  
Me. Audrey Naidoo  
Mr. Charles Visagie  
Mr. Nicolaas Pedro

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to all the children in South Africa who on a daily basis struggle with learning barriers.

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## GLOSSARY

<b>Terms/Acronyms/Abbreviations</b>	<b>Definition/Explanation</b>
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
COTLS	Culture of Teaching, Learning And Services
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
NCSNET	The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NCESS	the National Committee on Education Support Services
OOS-span/SGOS-span	Teacher Support Team/School Based Support Team
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
IOOP-leerders	individual development and support learners
CAPS-dokument	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
IQMS	The Integrated Quality Management System
AHA	Die Annatjie Hanekom leesonderrigkursus

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction and background to the research

#### 1.1 Introduction

South African policy and legislation require and direct the implementation of inclusive education. One way to ensure that all learners are able to function successfully in mainstream schools is the use of learner and learning support systems. Specific challenges experienced in rural areas and rural schools in general are also discussed in the literature. However, recent research studies and literature focuses on social exclusion, social inclusion, inclusive education and the description of the characteristics of learning support, but not specifically on the *implementation* of learning support in rural schools. This leads to a lack of understanding of examples of best-practices and the obstacles experienced regarding the *implementation* of learning support in rural schools. This present study specifically focused on the experiences, practices and perceptions of learning support by learning support professionals (i.e. teachers) in rural schools.

The need to conduct research on the implementation of learning support in rural schools was therefore identified as the research problem that guided this research study. In order to contextualise this present study, the next section will provide the reader with a description of the basic terms and concepts that are related to the research topic.

#### 1.2 Clarification of basic terms and concepts

The key concepts related to this present study are: Social exclusion, social inclusion, inclusive education, learning support and rural schools. These concepts will briefly be described below in terms of the relevance to this study.

### **1.2.1 Social exclusion**

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) refers to equal educational opportunities as a principle that is the “...the core of the right to education” and notes that this right is being violated when social exclusion takes place (UNESCO, 2012:5). Forms of exclusion within education include exclusion from “...having the life prospects needed for learning, entry into a school or an educational programme, regular and continuing participation in school or an educational programme, meaningful learning experiences, recognition of the learning acquired, contributing the learning acquired to the development of community and society” (UNESCO, 2012:7). Dieltens and Meny-Gibert (2012:131) distinguish between experiences, outcomes and processes of social exclusion. In terms of outcomes within the education system, the authors postulate that it leaves learners disempowered and unable to participate in learning processes (Dieltens and Meny-Gibert, 2012:138). In line with this description, the term “social exclusion”, within the educational context of this research study, refers to learners that are excluded from basic education opportunities for reasons beyond their control (Orr, 2005:6). Social exclusion furthermore affects one group of learners negatively (i.e. excluding them), while another group of learners are included in the education system. This continuum of inclusion/exclusion is furthermore characterised by unequal access to resources (for example schools, learner support, learning support and learning aids) and rights which leads to inequalities (Moosa-Mitha, 2005:41).

### **1.2.2 Social inclusion**

The right to education (cf. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Section 9 (2-5), 1996) is viewed as a key component of building an inclusive society (UNESCO, 2012:5). In an effort to provide guidelines on social inclusion in schools, the Organising Bureau of European School Students Union (OBESSU) recommends free and equal access to all educational systems and that no discrimination based on social standing and limitations occur within the systems (OBESSU, 2014:1). For the purpose of the present research study, social inclusion is aimed at addressing social exclusion and is based on the following principles “A dedication to build a more

democratic society, a more equitable and quality education system, and a belief that extends the responsibility of regular schools to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all learners” (Landsberg, 2005:1–2). The implementation of social inclusion in education therefore involves a process through which all learners are valued and where a platform is developed through which learners have opportunities to fulfil their potential and to participate in all educational opportunities with their peers (Surrey Country Council, 2012:2). This then requires that an inclusive educational system be developed, which will be discussed next.

### **1.2.3 Inclusive education**

Inclusive education will, in the context of this research study, be viewed within the framework of existing legislation and policy. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Section 29 (1), 1996) acknowledges the right to all to have a basic education. The mentioned right is linked to the achievement of equality and the prevention of discrimination (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Section 9 (2-5), 1996). Linked to this, the Education White Paper 6 (2001) is a policy document that provides guidelines for the movement towards inclusive education that will promote equality by means of equal access to learning resources and specific accommodation of learners with special needs. The Education White Paper 6 (2001) highlights that, within an inclusive school system, all children can learn and that learners with special needs should be supported to do so. Other aspects related to the development of an inclusive educational environment include a physical environment that addresses all the special needs of students and a framework where the individual needs of learners are identified and addressed (OBESSU, 2014:1). Therefore, for inclusive education to be implemented successfully, educational structures and/or systems are needed to ensure that schools can meet the needs of the whole population of learners. This then requires teaching environments where learner’s strengths are built to ensure full participation in the learning process (Education White Paper, 2001). Ntombela (2012:13), while reflecting on the progress of inclusive education in South Africa, found that “...changing the existing culture of exclusion, individualism, and marginalisation in schools to an inclusive one will take substantial amounts of time to achieve, far more than is currently allocated”. In line

with the focus of this present study, the author advises that further investigation is needed of practices that contribute to the effective implementation of inclusive education, and to identify obstacles that need to be addressed.

#### **1.2.4 Learning support**

Mahlo (2011:54) refers to the term learning support as a concept that “*acknowledges the potential of learners each to grow at their own pace towards a maximum level of independence in learning*”. A distinction is made between *learner* support and *learning* support in the literature. *Learner support* refers to specialised functions that are, according to Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2008:1), aimed at the improvement of teaching and learning. The authors refer to three forms of support services, namely support services to the educator, to the learners and to the teaching activities and structures (Mashau, et al., 2008:11). *Learning support* refers to the support provided by educational psychologists, school counsellors, therapists, special educators and learning support specialists and mainstream teachers to learners in order to address diverse needs (Dreyer, 2008:24). For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on learning support by learning support professionals (i.e. learning support teachers) as part of support services to educators and specifically to learners. Landsberg (2005:62) confirms that learning support is viewed as one way to support both the learners and the teachers. The author places emphasis on the fact that learning support relies on the collaboration of people from the relevant systems that the learners need in the process of learning. The aim of learning support is described by Dreyer (2008:64) in terms of the role of the learning support professional that is aimed at “*the identification and minimising of barriers to learning, and the promotion of participation within the mainstream class. It is about maximising resources to support learning and participation of all learners.*”

### 1.2.5 Rural schools

This research study will be demarcated to rural schools. Rural schools are schools that are situated in rural areas. The Deputy Minister of Education describes schools in these areas as “*characterised by various factors that negatively influence the delivery of quality education*” (Surty, 2011:8). The rural areas are viewed as remote and relatively underdeveloped, resulting in poor and disadvantaged schools that lack the basic infrastructure such as transport, electricity and information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Surty, 2011:8). A study by Maluleka (2008) regarding the capacity of school governing bodies in rural schools confirms a lack of infrastructure that continues to put strain on rural schools. Van den Berg (2008:iii) notes that the above-mentioned socio-economic conditions invariably play a role in quality education and states that it plays a vital role in educational outcomes. Surty (2011:8) argues that the said conditions put the learners at risk, and that the lack of professional help and support and resources furthermore places them at a disadvantage. This study was conducted in the Cape Winelands District of the Western Cape. Worcester is the largest town in this district. The schools that were included in this study were situated in surrounding towns and are characterised by long distances that children living on farms have to travel to the school and a lack of professional services in the smaller towns where the schools were situated (Cape Winelands District, 2012).

The above key concepts were used as a focus for a literature review that assisted the researcher to identify a theoretical framework appropriate to this research study and to identify the research problem.

### 1.3 Background to the research study and literature review

It should be noted that the socio-political shift towards a democracy in 1994 has placed the emphasis on important values such as equity, non-discrimination, liberty, respect and social justice (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Thus **legislation and policy documents underpinning inclusive education** in South Africa originate from a rights perspective informed by liberal, critical and progressive

democratic thought (Burden, 1999:15; Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht, 1999:7; Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001). In the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) the Department of Education and Training introduced key initiatives to respond to diverse learners' needs. These initiatives included:

- The Culture of Teaching, Learning And Services (COTLS), and now the Tirisano programme;
- The National Qualifications Framework (NQF);
- Curriculum 2005 based on an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach; and
- The new Language Policy.

The South African Schools Act (1996) legalised access for all learners to a school of their parents' choice. Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001), however, identified gaps and weaknesses in the Act, mainly in the wording of some of the clauses. The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) were tasked to develop an understanding of concepts such as 'special needs' and 'education support'. It was found that a range of needs existed among learners and within the education system and other systems in the environment. The need to develop sustainable ways to address effective learning among a diverse learner community was identified. This is in keeping with an ecological approach towards development, meaning that different systems in the education context must work together towards sustainable processes and frameworks for inclusive education (Department of National Education 1997:12). In addition, the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) emphasises strategies for access to the curriculum for learners with impairments, thereby further stressing and supporting the paradigm shift from a medical model of disability to a bio-ecological model to educational change and development based on the premise that society must change to accommodate the diverse needs of all its people (Landsberg, 2005:16; Dreyer, 2008:29-32).

The final policy document for inclusive education, namely the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system, was released in 2001. In this document a framework is provided for establishing an

inclusive education and training system in South Africa, focusing on the changes that are necessary to accommodate the full range of learning needs. Relevant principles that are acknowledged in this policy document are: Acknowledging and respecting that all people can learn, that all people learn differently and have different learning needs which are equally valued (Education White Paper 6, 2001). These principles supported the choice of theoretical framework for this present study.

This study was conducted from the **theoretical framework of inclusive education from the perspective of the bio-ecological model to educational change and development**. Reference will be made to this model during the following discussions. However, this theoretical framework will be discussed further in Chapter 2 that follows. In order to contextualise the choice behind this framework, the terms social exclusion and inclusion will be discussed first.

**Social exclusion** often stems from unequal power relationships. The four main dimensions that are influenced by social exclusion are: Economic-, political-, social- and cultural dimensions. The exclusion may take place on different levels; namely individuals, families and groups excluded on local, national and global levels (Moosa-Mitha, 2005:37). Social exclusion has been defined in a number of different ways which may include all or some of the following elements:

- disadvantage in relation to certain norms of social, economic or political activity pertaining to individuals, households, spatial areas or population groups;
- the social, economic and institutional processes through which disadvantage comes about; and
- the outcomes or consequences for individuals, groups or communities (Commission of the European Communities 1993:1).

Social exclusion in the *educational system* refers to the multiple and changing factors resulting in learners being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights to basic education of modern society. Exclusion as a societal practice especially affects learners in rural schools due to a lack of or a poor infrastructure



and a lack of or limited access to resources. This exclusion directly leads to a lack of respect for human dignity (Commission of the European Communities, 1993:1). Macrae, Maguire and Milbourne (2003:90) argue that exclusion from the educational system has far reaching implications, and that it could affect the learners' later capacity to participate fully in society in later life. The authors note that school exclusion often also leads to long-term social exclusion.

On the other hand, the term '**social inclusion**' has become something of an international and national buzzword. Social inclusion has, however, different meanings to different people in a variety of contexts (Dyson, 2001). It is therefore important to take cognisance of its meaning and the underlying values it is based on within a specific context. Social inclusion within the *educational system* responds to *all* learners' individual needs. Individual needs are acknowledged and respected and this should be reflected in school systems that recognise individual needs. Inclusion can therefore not be separated from school reform and educational change in the broader sense. The mentioned change is aimed at creating sustainable systems and structures that will support flexible and adaptable approaches to learning. This process of change requires knowledge and skills from principals, teachers and the school community (Landsberg, 2005:19). In a wider sense, inclusion is about developing inclusive community and education systems. It is based on a value system that acknowledges and respects diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language, socio-economic background, cultural origin and level of educational achievement or disability (Mittler, 2000:10). This value system supports a movement towards providing all learners with educational outcomes that schools offer. Inclusion in education is therefore about more than "special needs" or 'disabilities', and is concerned with comprehensive education, equality and collective belonging (Thomas and Loxley, 2001:1118).

**Inclusive education from the perspective of the bio-ecological model to educational change and development** highlights the complex influences and interactions apparent in education (Landsberg, 2005:15). Bronfenbrenner (2005:1)

explains that this model is based on a perception that human beings can create environments that influence their development. The author argues that human beings' genetic potential can be optimally enhanced by influencing environments (i.e. ecological systems). This relevance to this study is that humans (i.e. learning support professionals, teachers and policy makers) have the potential to shape the world of learners in "*intricate physical, social, technological, and cultural ways with the aim to nurture positive development*".

In terms of the ecological influence on social inclusion in schools, the extent of political and philosophical influence in the development of *specialised education* in South Africa resulted in inequalities and inconsistencies in provision between the previous racially segregated government and provincial departments, as the apartheid era categorised and officially classified people in terms of race (Donald, 1996; Du Toit, 1996; Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001; Mashau et al., 2008). While education and support services were well developed in those departments serving Whites and reasonably developed serving Coloureds and Indians, they were underdeveloped in departments serving Africans. Therefore the majority of learners, and specifically learners experiencing barriers to learning, were not only discriminated against along racial lines, but also by policy and legislation that separated 'normal' learners in the mainstream schools from learners identified as having 'special needs' and requiring education in a "special school". A further influencing factor was the strong focus on the medical model of diagnosis and treatment of 'learner deficits' within schools specially developed for specific needs. Segregation was promoted as a result and many learners did not have access to adequate educational and support services (Landsberg, 2005:16; Dreyer, 2008:29).

Inclusive education from the bio-ecological model to educational change and development thus places the focus on a single education system. In addition, this theoretical framework emphasises the need for support services which ensure a range of options for the provision of education to all learners (Engelbrecht et al., 1999:20). Giangreco (1997:194) and Mashau et al. (2008:1) specifically identified, among others, rural-urban disparities as an aspect to consider in the South African context when working towards inclusive education: Differences in terms of fiscal allocation, previously inherited disparate service provision, rural-urban disparities

and infrastructure. The bio-ecological model to educational change and development furthermore encourages a movement from primarily focusing on intrinsic causes of 'special educational needs' to including the view that learning and behaviour problems can be the reciprocal product of individual and environmental interaction. Such needs are largely related to environmental disadvantage or external factors (Landsberg, 2005:16).

However, Ntombela (2012:12- 13) found that the philosophy of the medical model is still dominant in the training of teachers. Thus, "...the values, beliefs, and practices of this model have become entrenched in teachers' ways of thinking about teaching and learning." The participants in the mentioned mentioned author's study still preferred separate provision of educational opportunities as a way to address learning barriers. It should also be noted that it was reported that "...communication lines between the different levels of the education system are clogged". Ladbrook (2009:149) recommends that "...challenges must be identified, acknowledged and addressed at all levels of education. The provision of support is an indispensable factor called for by successful implementation" [of inclusive education]. Donohue and Bornman (2014:26-27), however, note that some changes have been identified that point to a more inclusive school system. The authors distinguish between top-down and bottom-up theoretical approaches to policy implementation. Related to this present study, the bottom-up approach highlights the importance of understanding the perspectives and experiences of target groups and service deliverers (Donohue and Bornman, 2014:20-21). In 2015, Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit and van Deventer (2015:14) refer to "...a critical analysis of inclusive education policies that indicates that policy tends to have broader, ambiguous goal statements with little resource commitment and clear implementation strategies". The authors identify a gap between the conceptualisation of inclusive education in South African policy documents and its implementation.

**Barriers to learning and development** are defined as "...*those factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which lead to learning breakdown or which prevent learners from accessing educational provision*" (Department of National Education 1997:12). In 2010, reflecting on the status of inclusive education, accompanying challenges, the Department of Basic Education

(2010:3) distinguished between 1) pedagogical barriers (e.g. un- or under-qualified teachers, inappropriate teaching methodologies etc.) and intrinsic barriers (e.g. behavioural problems, psychosocial and emotional problems, cognitive and sensory disabilities, etc.). Similarly, according to the bio-ecological model to educational change and development, factors that can create barriers may be located within the learner, within the school, within the educational system and/or within the broader social; economic and political context. The range of factors resulting in barriers to learning can thus be viewed on a dynamic, interactive continuum for internal to external systemic factors (Landsberg, 2005:16). Steyn and Wolhuter (2008) explains that learning support is aimed at addressing barriers to learning by means of the improvement of quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. The authors assert that these services are preventative in nature and aims to minimise and eradicate learning barriers through the creation of conducive and supportive learning environments (Cf. Mashau et al., 2008).

**Learning support**, within the inclusive education paradigm, moves away from the conventional remedial education, and requires schools to respond to learners who experience barriers to learning. It implies enriching the regular education taking place in the classroom with learning support, for each to achieve the maximum independence possible in learning (Eloff, 2003:3; Landsberg, 2005:47; Education White Paper 6, 2001). Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2001:71) relates learning support and the bio-ecological model to educational change and development. The authors explain that this theoretical framework makes use of the constructivist approach, which implies that “*a high degree of flexibility is maintained with regard to the individual learner’s course of cognitive development*”.

The Education White Paper 6 (2001) makes provision for *learner support* by means of a systems approach. This approach draws on –

- all relevant resources to understand and address learning barriers;
- a community-based approach which focuses on drawing on local and indigenous resources in the process of providing support;

- an understanding of problems and their solutions in a 'systems' framework which emphasises the need for system transformation (e.g. institutional and curriculum development); and
- a focus on prevention and health promotion (Engelbrecht et al., 1999:52).

*Learning support* is viewed as a form of learner support.

Learning support assumes –

- collaboration of all role-players (e.g. teachers, family and community resources),
- adaptation of the curriculum,
- peer support,
- specialised intervention where required and
- counselling by a learning support professional (Donald et al., 2001:71).

For the purpose of this study, a learning support professional refers to learning support teachers who are appointed to support teachers and learners. The role of the **learning support professional** will be to identify and merge unique skills of relevant role-players. As a result, collaboration for accessible learning support is developed in the learner's environment (Engelbrecht et al., 1999:157; Landsberg, 2005:47).

With the specific focus on **learning support in rural schools**, the focus of literature and recent research studies are on social inclusion, social exclusion, inclusive education and characteristics of learning support. Information regarding learning support in rural schools, and specifically in South Africa, is limited. In order to obtain an overview of recent studies related to learning support in rural schools in South Africa, the researcher visited SABINET and ERIC to access data basis. Studies related to learning support mainly focused on learner support for online or distance Higher Education (cf. Thorpe, 2002; McLaughlin, 2002; Hughes, 2007; Van Rosmalen, Sloep, Koster, Brauns, de Croock, Pannekeet and Koper, 2008). Dreyer (2008) evaluated a learning support model in primary schools in the West Coast/Winelands Area of the Western Cape, while Mahlo's study (2011) focused on the experiences of learning support teachers in the foundation phase regarding the

implementation of inclusive education in Gauteng. Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Moolla and Sylvester (2014) reported on learners' experiences of learning support in selected Western Cape schools and a study by Maluleka (2008) focused on the capacity of governing bodies of rural schools. However, no specific focus was placed on the implementation of learning support in rural schools in South Africa based on the perspectives and experiences of teachers and learning support professionals.

The literature above provided the researcher with a focus for this research study (Kreuger and Neuman, 2006:13). It enabled him to identify the research problem that formed the foundation for this research study.

#### **1.4 Problem formulation**

Learning support in schools is one way to adhere to South African policy and legislation that require and direct the implementation of inclusive education. It is aimed at enabling all learners to function successfully in mainstream schools. Recent research studies and literature focuses on social exclusion, social inclusion, inclusive education and the characteristics of learning support. Studies by, among others, Ntombela (2012), Ladbroke (2009), Donohue and Bornman (2014) and Engelbrecht et al. (2015) acknowledge that the implementation of inclusive education remains a challenge. In terms of a bottom-up approach to policy development and implementation of inclusive education, the need arises to continuously develop an understanding of the perspectives and experiences of target groups and service deliverers (cf. Donohue and Bornman, 2014). In addition, the literature review above points to a need to explore the implementation of learning support in rural schools in South Africa based on the perspectives and experiences of teachers and learning support professionals. It was envisaged that such an exploration, together with a description of best-practices and obstacles experienced, could add value to the effective implementation of inclusive education with specific focus on the provision of support (cf. Ladbroke, 2009:149).

The research problem above directed the formulation of the research question, described in the next section.

## **1.5 Research questions**

A research question results from the preliminary literature review and the formulation of the research topic. When formulating the research question, the researcher narrows down exactly 'what' the study must investigate (Babbie, 2007:109). The purpose of the research question is mainly to guide the researcher through the research study in order to obtain data that will enable the researcher to develop insight into the research problem (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:54). The research problem (Section 1.4) supported the researcher to formulate thoughts to identify a specific question regarding the research topic (Jansen, 2007:3). This led to the formulation of the following two questions:

- What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by learning support professionals?
- What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by teachers?

In order to answer the research questions, a research aim and objectives were identified.

## **1.6 Research aim and objectives**

The **aim** of a research study refers to the 'goal or purpose' and therefore should describe the desired end-result of a research study (Fouché and De Vos, 2011:94). The research aim for this study describes what the researcher wanted to achieve through the study. The researcher therefore attempted to formulate the aim in such a

way that it could provide answers to the research question, and therefore address the research problem (Rubin and Babbie; 2005:649; Creswell, 2009:112-13). Following the research question, the aim of this research study was formulated as follows:

- To explore and describe the nature of learning support in rural schools based on the perspectives and experiences of teachers and learning support professionals, in order to provide learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities with recommendations to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools

Research **objectives** are formulated to guide the research process and to provide a clear description of the steps needed to attain the aim of the research study (Fouché and De Vos, 2011:94). The researcher distinguished between research objectives (i.e. related to the aim) and task objectives (i.e. related to the steps that had to be followed). The research objectives are illustrated as such in the table below.

**Table 1.1:** Research objectives

<b>Research objectives</b>	<b>Task objectives</b>
To explore the nature of learning support in rural schools by means of a qualitative data collection method	To obtain a sample of participants who are able to answer the research questions To contact the education authorities and participants To obtain signed consent To develop an interview schedule for the semi-structured interviews To conduct semi-structured interviews
To analyse the qualitative data in order to describe the nature of learning support in rural schools	To record the semi-structured interviews and to make field notes To transcribe the data that have been collected To analyse the data
To describe the nature of learning support in rural schools based on the qualitative data	To verify the collected data with current and relevant literature
To do a literature control in order to verify the qualitative description with literature, theories and practice examples	To make an interpretation from the findings and to use the interpretation to draw conclusions
To make recommendations for learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools	To make recommendations for learning support in rural schools professionals, teachers and education authorities



## **1.7 Research Methodology**

Research methodology refers to the approaches, methods and techniques that the researcher uses to obtain data in a scientifically sound manner (Kumar, 2005:195). This section will describe the following choices the researcher made with regards to the research methodology:

- The research approach,
- the research design,
- the population and sampling,
- the method of data collection,
- the method of data analysis,
- data verification and
- ethical considerations.

The reason behind the choices is discussed in this chapter, while the implementation thereof will be discussed in Chapter 2 as part of data verification.

### **1.7.1 The research approach**

The researcher opted to make use of the qualitative research approach to answer the research questions, based on the following characteristics of this approach as described by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94-97), Kumar (2005:12) and Creswell (2007:37-39):

- Qualitative research is implemented to explore and describe a specific situation, in this case the learning support in rural schools.
- The qualitative research approach often leads to tentative answers that provide a focus for further research. Due to the lack of information regarding learning support in rural schools (see Section 1.4), the researcher hoped that the research findings would provide some answers to serve as recommendations for further research.
- Qualitative research is based on inductive reasoning. The researcher envisaged that the research findings that were based on the particular context of rural

schools would move towards the generalisation of the results to learning support in general.

The research designs that provided the researcher with strategies to obtain the qualitative research data (Flick, 2006:141) will be described below.

### **1.7.2 The research designs**

Qualitative research designs assist the researcher with the choices of methods and techniques to use to implement the qualitative research study (Fouché and Schurink, 2011:307).

The research problem that directed this study points towards a lack of knowledge regarding the current nature of learning support in rural schools. The aim of this research is to explore this aspect in order to add to the education profession's knowledge base. The **exploratory research design** was chosen to assist the researcher to explore the real life experiences of people related to the research topic in order to develop insight into the research problem and to answer the research question (Fouché and De Vos, 2011:95).

The **descriptive research design** is often used in combination with the explorative research design. The value of this design is that it assists the qualitative researcher with answering the research question through a clear description of the qualitative data in terms of "why" and "how" (Kreuger and Neuman, 2006:23). This design was chosen for this study to ensure that the aim is attained, as the description of the qualitative data would assist the researcher with a deeper understanding of the research topic and with the development of recommendations for practice (Rubin and Babbie, 2005:125).

In addition, this research study is conducted within the specific context of rural schools. Therefore the **contextual research design** was included to inform the choice related the population and sampling method and techniques (Holzblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2005:22).

### 1.7.3 Population and sampling

A **population** refers to the specific boundaries regarding the participants in a qualitative research study. Within the explorative and contextual nature of this research study, the boundaries determined “who” the people related to the research topic is. This then assisted the researcher to ensure that the possible participants were able to answer the research questions (Denscombe, 2008:141). For the purpose of this research study, the following two populations were identified:

- All teachers at rural schools in the Western Cape
- All learning support professionals at rural schools in the Western Cape

**Sampling** is used to obtain a representation from the population, as it is often too expensive and time consuming to include the whole population in a research study (Denscombe, 2008:141). In order to obtain a representative sample, the researcher made use of the **non-probability sampling method**. In this method the odds of selecting a particular individual are not known. It means that all the individuals in the population does not have an equal chance to be included, because the researcher does not know the population size at the onset of the research study (Gravetter and Forzano 2003:118). Patton (2002:244) explains that the **sample size** in qualitative research studies are determined by data saturation, meaning that the size will be determined when data becomes repetitive.

The **purposive sampling technique**, typical of the non-probability sampling method, was chosen for this study. This sampling technique is specifically relevant to this study’s explorative and contextual nature, as it relies on the researcher’s judgement regarding “who” would be best qualified to answer the research question. The criteria for inclusion in this research study were narrowed down to:

- From the population of teachers at rural schools: All Grade 1 to 6 teachers at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5)
- From the population of learning support professionals at rural schools: All learning support professionals at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5) who are qualified teachers with a minimum experience of two years in learning support

Once the populations and samples were chosen, the researcher was able to consider the most appropriate method of data collection.

#### **1.7.4 The method of data collection**

DePoy and Gilson (2008:108) describe interviewing as the predominant method of data collection in qualitative research. This method enables researchers to explore the perceptions and experiences of the people related to the research problem. The researcher identified **semi-structured interviews** as an effective method to obtain the qualitative data for the purpose of this research study, based on its explorative and contextual nature. This method assisted the researcher to formulate specific questions related to the research topic, questions and aim and it also allowed the participants to elaborate and to provide information that they deemed to be important. Although semi-structured interviews require that specific questions must be answered, it is flexible in nature to allow the researcher and participants to fully explore the research topic (Greeff, 2011:351).

The researcher opted to make use of an **interview schedule**, with specific questions related to the research topic, -problem and -question. This served as a basic guide for the interview. Two separate sets of questions were developed for the two populations, as teachers' experiences included experiences of inclusive education in mainstream schools. The following questions were identified and served as an interview guide for the semi-structured interviews:

##### **Questions to the learning support professionals:**

- Describe your understanding of learning support.
- How is it implemented at your school/schools where you work?
- What are the obstacles that you experience regarding learning support in a rural area?
- What in your opinion works well regarding learning support in a rural area?
- What would you like to recommend regarding future planning of learning support in rural schools?

### **Questions to teachers:**

- What is your perception of the term 'inclusive education'?
- What is your perception of the term 'learning support'?
- How do you implement inclusive education in your classroom?
- How is learning support provided at your school?
- What are the obstacles you experience related to inclusive education and learning support?
- What, in your opinion, works well regarding inclusive education and learning support?
- What would you like to recommend regarding future implementation of learning support to ensure successful inclusive education in rural schools?

Greeff's (2011:359) description of methods of qualitative data recording was chosen. This entailed the use of audio tapes and field notes. The author advises that the audio tapes are transcribed and added to the field notes immediately after the interviews take place. As this aspect impacts on confidentiality and privacy, permission from the participants must be asked to tape record the interviews.

### **1.7.5 The method of data analysis**

Babbie and Mouton (2009:410) describe data analysis in qualitative research as the process where data that was collected through interviews are analysed and interpreted. These authors explain that the qualitative researcher mainly makes use of a coding system, but mention that computer programmes that are designed for qualitative research analysis can also be used. The coding system entails that the qualitative data is coded to assist the researcher to identify themes and sub-themes. Tesch (1990:142-145) developed a framework for qualitative data analysis. Creswell (2009:185, 186) provides a layout and practical guideline for the use of this framework by means of eight steps to be followed. The researcher made use of these steps to ensure a scientifically sound method of data analysis. These steps and the implementation thereof will be described in Chapter 3.

### **1.7.6 The method of data verification**

Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:419) refer to the model for data verification developed by Guba and published in Krefting (1991). The following methods are used to ensure the validity of the qualitative data: Truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. The researcher included these four methods while conducting the research study to ensure the validity of the data collected during this study. The implementation of these methods and techniques will be described in Chapter 3. This study was based on certain ethical considerations as described in the next section.

## **1.8 Ethical considerations**

In order to ensure that this study adheres to sound ethical practice. The description of aspects that were considered throughout the research process are provided below, while the implementation thereof will be described in Chapter 3.

### **1.8.1 Do no harm**

It is always a possibility that participants in a social research study could be harmed in physical and/or emotional manner. For this reason, Babbie (2007:27) concurs that the ethical principle of “do no harm” is a fundamental ethical rule of social research. Participants in research studies must be made aware of the possible disadvantages and advantages of participation.

### **1.8.2 Privacy**

Morris (2006:246) notes that privacy, in terms of research, means that participants will be required to share what they normally would not have shared. For this reason, the researcher should inform participants that they can decide what to share and what not to share. In addition, their names should not appear on the transcripts and the use of the independent coder will ensure that their responses forms part of a “general storyline” derived from all the responses, so that individual responses cannot be identified.

### **1.8.3 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality forms part of privacy, and is aimed at the assurance that the data will be treated as confidential. Anonymous responses, the safe-keeping of records and tape recordings and limited access to the raw data are some strategies that could ensure confidentiality in social research (Babbie, 2007:65).

### **1.8.4 Informed consent**

Informed consent means that the participants are informed of all the main aspects related to the research study, and that they can provide consent based on acceptance of these aspects. It is always advisable to provide participants with written information and that they provide written consent (Grinnell and Unrau 2008:37). In addition, participants should be made aware of the fact that they can decide to end their participation at any time.

Annexure A and B indicate how the researcher considered the mentioned ethical aspects in terms of a written invitation with all the relevant information and an informed consent form.

## **1.9 Expected outcomes, results and contributions of the research**

It is envisaged that this research study would contribute to inclusive education in South African rural schools. As stated in the research problem (see Section 1.4) South African legislation and policy are directed at ensuring that all people are enabled to access resources and to develop their potential. Inclusive education is aimed at these legislative requirements, while learning support is one way of achieving it. This research would contribute to the following: Knowledge regarding the implementation of learning support in rural schools, insight obtained from current practices and understanding of the obstacles experienced in this regard.

### **1.10 Layout of the document and conclusion of chapter**

The layout of this research study is therefore as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the research, problem formulation, the research questions and the research aim and objectives, together with a brief description of the research process and methodology that was chosen.

Chapter 2: A review of the literature related to the research topic and the findings.

Chapter 3: A description of the implementation of the research methodology, together with a scientific grounding of the implementation (reference to literature).

Chapter 4: The research findings and literature control.

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The discussion will serve as a literature control of the findings presented in Chapter 4 of this research report. In line with the focus and findings of this research study, this chapter will focus on:

- Bio-ecological model to educational change and development,
- Inclusive education,
- Barriers to learning and
- Learning support.

#### **2.2 Bio-ecological model to educational change and development**

The bio-ecological model to educational change and development served as the theoretical framework for this research study. This model highlights the importance of understanding a person's development within environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:37). It furthermore places the focus on the complex influences and interactions apparent in a single system education model (Landsberg, 2005:15). By viewing a learner from this theoretical framework, the teacher is able to understand the learner holistically. This will help the teacher to gain insight on pedagogical expertise and support needed in order to provide support to learners who experience barriers to learning.

The model consists of four concepts, namely process, person, context and time. These four concepts and the relevance to this study will be described below (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:793-828).

- The process: Development takes place through a process that includes two central propositions. The first proposition is that "... human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment". In this present

study, it entails that, for support to be effective, regular interaction between the learner and his/her support systems is needed. This interaction could take place through group and/or individual activities. It should, however, be noted that processes are different depending on the person and the context. In terms of context, this present study focuses on learning support in rural schools. The second proposition is that the processes are influenced by the different layers of the learner's functioning (i.e. the micro, mezzo, exo, macro and chronosystems in which the learner functions) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998:993-1023).

- The person: Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006:800) assert that the personal characteristics of individuals play a role in social interactions that are needed for development and growth. Three personal characteristics are identified, namely –
  - Demand characteristics such as age, gender or physical appearance. These characteristics stimulate the interaction and set processes in motion.
  - Resource characteristics include mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, intelligence and skills, as well as material resources such as access to support systems.
  - Force characteristics refer to "...variations in motivation, persistence and temperament". The authors note that a drive to succeed and persistence are characteristics needed to overcome barriers.
- The context: The learner lives within a micro-system, inside a mezzo-system, embedded in an exo-system, all of which are a part of the macro-system (Woolfolk, 2007:73). The fifth layer is the chrono-system (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998:993-1023; Santrock, 2006:52). Bronfenbrenner (1994:39-41) explains these systems as follows:
  - Micro-system: Face-to-face interactions, activities and social experiences that influence the learner's learning experiences and processes.
  - Mezzo-system: Relationship between more than one setting of the learner's life (e.g. school and home).
  - Exo-system: Relationship between one setting directly related to the learner's life and another setting that indirectly influences the learner (e.g. school and the parent's workplace).

- Macro-system: Cultural, life-style, resources, etc. that have an influence on the learner's functioning.
- Chronosystem: Changes over time that influence the learner – it could refer to personal developmental changes, family structure changes (e.g. the loss of a parent) or environmental changes (e.g. socio-economic impacts).
- Time: Within a developmental framework, time is constituted at three levels related to the context. On a micro-level, the focus is on what is happening during specific episodes in the interaction processes (between the learner and support systems. On a meso-level, time is viewed in terms the extent to which the processes occur in the person's environment (i.e. over the course of days, weeks or years). The macro-level refers to the chronosystem. The focus is therefore on interactions and experiences across the lifespan and generations (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:793-828).

The terms inclusive education, barriers to learning and learning support have been described in Chapter 1. In this chapter, these terms will be further clarified and discussed.

### **2.3 Inclusive education**

The development of specialised education in South Africa followed trends similar to those in most other countries. International movements have directly influenced and continue to influence educational policies and practices. However, a distinguishing aspect in the history of South African specialised education is the extent of political and philosophical influence (Mashau et al., 20081). South African education entered a new era in 1994 when a democracy was declared. This resulted in a shift towards an emphasis on values such as equity, non-discrimination, liberty, respect and social justice that was reflected in emerging policy documents and subsequent legislation. The development of policy documents and legislation, integrated with international guidelines, relate directly to the development and implementation of an inclusive education system (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001).

Inclusive education is a learner-centred approach to learning and teaching. It is focused on the development of learners' strengths and empowering and enabling them to participate actively and critically in the learning process (Education White Paper 6, 2001:19). In line with this description, the aim of inclusive education, and specifically within the bio-ecological model to educational change and development, is to provide *all* learners with an opportunity to develop to their full potential. In this regard, the South African Schools Act (Act. no 84 of 1996) makes provision for compulsory education for all and universal admission to public schools: "*The member of the executive council (for each province) must, where reasonably practicable, provide education for learners who experience barriers to learning at ordinary public schools and also provide relevant educational support services for such learners*". Pottas (2005:23) explains that the purpose of inclusive education is not only to "allow" all learners to enter the mainstream school system, but to provide them with opportunities, resources and support to reach their potential. Smith (2010:264), however, argues that learning support services to address barriers of learning within the inclusive educational system should focus less on the attributes of learners and more in terms of models "*that works to ensure school success*". This is in line with the bio-ecological model to educational change and development that places the focus on developing an environment that would be conducive to optimal growth and development.

Giangreco (1997:194) and Engelbrecht et al. (1999:20) argue that, ideally, an inclusive system should be similar to the following characteristics:

- All learners are welcomed in general education classes in their local schools.
- Learners are educated in classes where the numbers of those with and without disabilities are proportional to the local population.
- Learners are educated with peers in the same age groups available to those with disability labels.
- Learners with varying characteristics and abilities participate in shared educational experiences while pursuing individually appropriate learning outcomes with the necessary support and accommodation.

- Shared educational experiences take place in settings predominantly frequented by people without disabilities (e.g. general education classrooms; community work sites).
- Educational experiences are designed to enhance individually determined, valued life outcomes for students and therefore seek to establish an individualised balance between the academic/functional and social/personal aspects of schooling.

Based on the abovementioned characteristics, it is concluded that inclusive education refers to inclusive practice to accommodate all learners in mainstream classrooms. Within this approach, learners with special needs spend most or all of their time with learners without special needs. Inclusive education is, however, more than just integrating learners with learning needs. It is about the learner's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child (Tapasak and Walther-Thomas, 1999:216). Strully and Strully (1996) provide some guidelines regarding skills to implement inclusive education:

- Using games designed to build community,
- Involving learners in solving problems,
- Sharing songs and books that teach community,
- Openly dealing with individual differences by discussion,
- Assigning classroom jobs that build community,
- Teaching learners to look for ways to help each other and
- Focusing on the strength of a learner with special needs.

Additionally, Giangreco, Cloninger and Iverson (1998) and Ladsbrook (2009:135-136) place emphasis on the following to ensure effective practice of inclusive education:

- Adequate support and services for the learner,
- Professional development for all teachers involved,
- Time for teachers to plan, meet, create, and evaluate the learners together,

- Reduced class size based on the severity of the student needs,
- Professional skill development in the areas of cooperative learning, peer tutoring, adaptive curriculum,
- Collaboration between parents or guardians, teachers, specialists, administration, and outside agencies and
- Sufficient funding so that schools will be able to develop programmes for learners based on learners' needs instead of the availability of funding.

The emphasis on aspects needed to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education is in line with the bio-ecological model to educational change and development (Landsberg, 2005:15; Bronfenbrenner, 2005:1). It includes all the relevant resources to understand and address barriers to learning, a community-based approach which focuses on drawing on local and indigenous resources in the process of providing support and an understanding of problems and their solutions in a “systems” framework which emphasises the need for system transformation (e.g. institutional and curriculum development).

## **2.4 Barriers to learning**

The term ‘barriers to learning’ refers to difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself which prevent access to learning and development for learners (Department of Education, 2008:7).

The NCSNET and NCESS report recommends that barriers to learning is addressed through the development of a preventative and health-promoting system, including additional support that will be required by some learners either throughout or at some point in their learning journey. Such support includes counselling, career guidance, specific learning support, social interventions and assistive devices. It is furthermore recommended that supportive services be developed, implemented and managed by all sections of national and provincial departments. This entails the development of a framework for service delivery at district and learning-site level and district support teams with the primary responsibility of developing the capacity of

learning sites and site-based support teams to address learning barriers effectively. This aspect will be discussed further in the sections that follow.

Research conducted by the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training identified the following barriers to learning in the South Africa context:

- Socio-economic deprivation, including poverty; lack of access to basic services; exposure to danger; inaccessible environments; and unsafe buildings,
- Barriers arising from impairments, including physical; cognitive; sensory; developmental and learning impairments,
- Negative attitudes to and stereotyping of differences,
- An inflexible curriculum,
- Inappropriate languages, or language of learning and teaching and language of communication,
- Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services,
- Inadequate policies and legislation and
- Lack of parental recognition and involvement (Department of National Education 1997:12; Landsberg, 2005:16).

Additionally, language as a learning barrier was identified by the participants in this study. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) stipulates the right for learners to receive education in their home language or language of their choice. However, in practice learners are often placed in schools where the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) differs from that of their home language. This aspect is viewed as one reason why South African schools are showing poor academic achievement (Foley, 2010:2; Department of Basic Education, 2012). The Department of Basic Education (2012) specifically refers to the fact that barely a quarter of African language learners, who receive education in a second or third language, are likely to progress academically because of poor language proficiency.

Another barrier identified in this study was parental illiteracy. Parental illiteracy as a barrier to learning is an international concern. In America, 43% of illiterate persons live in poverty and a child who grows up in a home with at least one illiterate parent is twice as likely to be illiterate (National Illiteracy Action Project, 2007:1). Cree, Kay

and Stewart (2012:6) explain that illiterate parents are unable to support their children academically on the one hand, and on the other hand they tend to have lower academic aspiration for their children. It also leads to less involvement in their children's school work.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome was also identified as a learning barrier in this study. These learners experience the following barriers that need to be addressed in the inclusive education system (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, 2013:15-16): Movement, attention, communication, reading, verbal memory and executive and psychosocial functioning.

Inclusive education requires that learning barriers are being addressed on an on-going, daily basis by means of learner and learning support.

## **2.5 Learning support**

Pottas (2005:19) explains that the educational, political, social and economic changes world-wide influenced the way education is approached, and that inclusive education is viewed as a means to *serve* all learners within a single system. For this reason, the Department of Education (1997) proposed, through the report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), a focus on the diverse needs of the learner population by means of interventions aimed at facilitating transformation of schools and curricula.

The introduction to inclusive education, as stipulated by the Education White Paper 6 (2001:8, 23), placed emphasis on the general orientation and introduction of management, governing bodies and professional staff to the inclusion model, and the targeting of early identification of the range of diverse learning needs and intervention in the Foundation Phase. In order to work according to the strategies proposed in the Education White Paper 6 (2001) learner and learning support should be established, monitored and developed to ensure equal opportunities and optimal learning of all learners in the educational system. However, the following factors



were found to negatively impact on the quality of teaching and learning in South African primary schools, which also influences the support provided to learners who experience learning barriers: the physical environment of many schools was not conducive to quality teaching and learning, poor lighting and seeing conditions in these schools hampered the learning process and most schools lacked adequate supplies of teaching and learning materials (Department of Education, 2005a:47).

In terms of the classroom, "... learner support refers to difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself which prevent access to learning and development for learners" (Department of Education, 2008:7). Differentiation to accommodate different learning needs are categorised in terms of the following (Department of Education, 2008:14-15):

- Low (levels 1-3): Differentiated Curriculum implemented within regular classroom by school-based staff who have been adequately trained to implement it;
- Moderate (level 4): Differentiated Curriculum is extended from the regular classroom to include access to disability, therapy programmes and specialised skills development programmes and
- Very High/High ((level 5): Highly structured individual educational plan is needed which is dependent on access to therapy programmes (behaviour/sensory integration/communication/personal care), adjustment to regular classroom programs (time-tabling, use of assistive devices/specialist rooms and specialised LTSM); regular specialist input.

In this regard the Department of Education (2008:22, 30) suggests that learning support should entail the verification of decisions that have been made by the school in consultation with the parents/care-givers, teachers and SBSTs members. Two levels of analysis that could support further development of learning support programmes are acknowledged:

- What links directly to the learner that needs to be followed up?
- Which are the programmatic implications?

The Department of Education (2008:6, 17) refers to support programmes as structured interventions delivered at schools and in classrooms within specific time frames. The mentioned department acknowledges that time is affected by "...factors such as the distances that need to be travelled (urban versus rural) and the range of intensity (low, moderate, high) of support that is needed in the schools. It is therefore suggested that in allocating support staff based at circuit and district levels, the number of schools they need to service, the physical span of the district/circuit, and the nature of support that would be provided, must be considered in terms of contextual needs."

The need for regular access to support is highlighted. In mainstream schools support by specialised staff is focused on group work and limited individual learner intervention. Kutnick and Blatchford (2013:28) discuss group work in primary school classes and advise that smaller groups assist learners to become less dependent on the teacher as learners are encouraged and supported to engage with the learning activities. These authors advise a group size of between four and six learners. Baines, Chowne, Hargreaves, Ota, Page, Pell, Smith and Steward (2005:1) state that groups in education are often formed without a clear purpose and therefore not used effectively. The benefits for learners are, among others, that learners learn from each other, support and challenge one another and that it provides a structured environment where learners are actively engaged in the learning activities.

Learning support will further be discussed in terms of learning support systems, learners eligible for learning support and the learning support professional.

### **2.5.1 Learning support systems**

In line with bio-ecological model to educational change and development, different systems and role-players need to be involved in the effective implementation of inclusive education, and to provide learners with learning barriers with relevant support. From the perspective of the bio-ecological model to educational change and development, support provision implies –

- a commitment to an integrated approach which draws on all relevant resources to understand and address barriers to learning;

- a community-based approach which focuses on drawing on local and indigenous resources in the process of providing support;
- an understanding of problems and their solutions in a “systems” framework which emphasises the need for system transformation (e.g. institutional and curriculum development) and
- a focus on prevention and health promotion (Landsberg, 2005:15).

The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) makes provision for the provinces to assume responsibility for the provision and organisation of the education of learners who experience barriers to learning. It furthermore specifies that the provision of education to learners who experience barriers to learning and the educational support services should form an integral part of education and should not be viewed as a separate section. There should therefore be an inclusive and integrated approach to the provision of services to learners who experience such barriers that also accommodates the expectations of schools and the Department of Basic Education. Dreyer (2008:24) specifically refers to Learning Support Model in some schools in the Western Cape. On level one, this involves learning support by mainstream teachers who work in collaboration with the learning support professional and other role-players within and from outside the school and the Institution Level Support Team. On level two learners are withdrawn from the mainstream class for small-group instruction by the learning support professional. It entails support provided by the mainstream teacher. The author also discussed levels three and four where learners are referred to special schools for a high level of support. Levels one and two support was the focus of this present study.

In addition, the role of the school principal in the implementation of inclusive education and learning support is highlighted by the Department of Education (2005b:39). The Department of Education (2005b:19) also acknowledges parents as key role players in terms of community resources to be utilised to support learners. In the rural context, it appears that a lack of infrastructure and access to resources remains a problem. These communities are still characterised by homes, businesses and services that are situated far from each other; and also have to deal with various

challenges such as limited services (Van Gundy, 2006; National Geographic Education, 2013).

Support to learners who experience barriers to learning must be provided by learning support teams. The Department of Education (2005b:35) explains the purpose of these teams as "...to support the teaching and learning process". The reference to a process means that it is on-going in nature. Key functions include:

- "Coordinating all learner, educator, curriculum and institution development support in the institution. This includes linking this support team to other school-based management structures and processes, or even integrating them for better coordination of activities and to avoid duplication;
- Collectively identifying institutional needs and, in particular, barriers to learning at learner, educator, curriculum and institutional levels;
- Collectively developing strategies to address these needs and barriers to learning. This should include major focuses on educator development, parent consultation and support;
- Drawing in the resources needed, from within and outside of the institution, to address these challenges and
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the team within an 'action-reflection' framework" (Department of Education, 2005b:32).

In terms of Education White Paper 6 (2001), the main role of the district-based support system is to design and evaluate intervention programmes, diagnose the effectiveness of the programmes, and suggest modifications where necessary. The Department of Education (2005b:9) furthermore provides guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education through District Based Support Teams (DBSTs) and accentuates that this includes the provision of teaching and learning materials and equipment to facilitate learning for all learners. The role of the DBSTs are described by the Department of Education (2008:7) "...groups of departmental professionals whose responsibility it is to promote inclusive education through training, curriculum delivery, distribution of resources, identifying and addressing barriers to learning, leadership and general management".

The role of the advisors is furthermore explained in Education White Paper 6 (2001:19). The White Paper provided for orientation and training of learning support professionals and teachers by the DBSTs. It is proposed in this policy that the focus should be on teaching and learning factors, and emphasis should be placed on the development of good teaching strategies that will be “...*of benefit to all learners; on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs; and on adaptation of and support systems available in the classroom*” (cf. Mahlo, 2011:124-125).

Frank (2003:1) refers to the importance of School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) to realise inclusive education, but warns that although it is imperative, the fiscal realities must be considered to ensure that it is developed effectively. In this regard, the Department of Education (2005b:5) developed conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education through District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs). It is described as a “... targeted outreach programme, beginning in Government’s rural and urban development nodes”. These teams should include psychologists, specialised and general counsellors, therapists and other health and welfare workers employed by the department of education, and various learning support personnel (Department of Education, 2005b:8).

### **2.5.2: Learners eligible for learning support**

In line with the different concept described by the bio-ecological model for educational change and development, the Department of Education (2005b:6) describe learners who are eligible for learning support as learners who experience barriers to learning in terms of –

- Communication,
- Contextual, social and behaviour factors,
- Safety,
- Access to the learning environment,
- Health, wellness and personal care and
- Learners who experience socio-economic challenges.

The assessment of learners are to identify learning needs was noted. The Department of Education's Operational Manual to the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2008:22) was developed with the aim "...to provide support to all learners in an educational setting as close as possible to their homes. This policy is intended to bring support to the learner, rather than take the learner to the support". Assessments, according to this manual, should include the following principles:

- Educators, parents and learners need to be centrally involved in the process.
- The purpose of the assessment should be clear and open.
- Assessment needs to be appropriate and relevant to the realities and context of the person or institution concerned.
- Assessment must be fair, bias-free, and sensitive to gender, race, cultural background and abilities.
- Assessment needs to identify barriers to learning, with the purpose of improving the teaching and learning process.
- Assessment needs to be a continuous process that is built into the teaching and learning process.
- Assessment needs to be multi-dimensional or systemic in nature, located within the framework of barriers at the individual (learner and educator), curriculum, institution, and family, community and social contextual levels. The different levels of the system that are involved in the assessment process (e.g. Institution-Level Support Teams and District-Based Support Teams) need to work closely together, ensuring that assessment processes are smoothly pursued.
- Assessment results must be clearly, accurately and timeously documented and communicated to those affected (Department of Education, 2008:23-24).

### **2.5.3: The learning support professional**

Dreyer (2008:63) asserts that the "traditional role of mainstream teachers is being challenged by the shift from the medical model to a human rights approach, which advocates the education of learners who experience barriers to learning within the mainstream classroom". Evans (2004:34) reflects on the challenges experienced by mainstream teachers in inclusive education classrooms and asserts that these

teachers are also entitled to support. The author explains that ongoing in-service training could empower teachers to solve problems more effectively. Landsberg (2005:62) supports this viewpoint and refers to learning support as a way to provide both teachers and learners with support for effective inclusion to take place. Sukhraj (2006:5) and other literature (cf. Education White Paper 6, 2001:13; Surty, 2011:8; Commission of the European Communities, 1993:1) raised a concern regarding training and access to resources in the implementation of inclusive education: "The training of educators to teach learners with varying disabilities simultaneously has not begun...which have frustrated educators, as they do not have faith in inclusion because they do not receive the support promised by the department".

The implementation of learning support in the classroom is accentuated in the Education White Paper 6 (2001) where it is stated that classroom teachers are the primary resource for achieving the goal of inclusive education. The White Paper acknowledges that the teachers will therefore require support in the form of collaboration with, among others, support personnel within DBSTs. According to Sands, Kozleski and French (2000:120) support is the cornerstone of successful inclusive education and that it should be aimed as the development of a supportive and caring school environment in which a sense of community – a sense that everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by all members of the school community. Friend and Cook (2007:3) support this viewpoint and refer to collaboration between professionals as an important strategy of support for inclusive education, which again supports the incorporation of the bio-ecological model for education and development.

Mahlo (2011:16) confirms that part of the learning support professional's role is to provide support to the mainstream teacher. Learning support should be well planned based on the assessments done by both the teacher and the learning support professional. According to Ladbrook (2009:14) the learning support professional needs to develop individual programmes and educational plans to address the learning need of the learner on the one hand, and to support the mainstream teacher on the other hand. This is in line with the Department of Education (2008:26) advice that the assessments should contribute towards the development of profiles of learners, educators and institutions. In terms of planning, it should be based on

learning needs and whether learning is successfully occurring. Planning should indicate where and how barriers should be addressed. This could include various interventions at any level of the 'system', such as an intervention with the learner or educator; transformation of some aspect of the curriculum; development of the institutional environment; or addressing particular family, community or social factors. This description also relates well to the bio-ecological model to education educational change and development.

In terms of the learner professional's role in curriculum implementation it is noted that support is provided on a very high level in terms of "...Curriculum differentiation that requires support of specialised staff ... and designing down of assessment standards is deeper than what is expected for same-age peers". This entails a highly structured individual educational plan that focuses on behaviour, sensory integration, communication and personal care. This plan must be in line with the classroom activities, as also described by the participants above (Department of Education, 2008:14). Dreyer (2008:233) refers in this regard to the changing role of the learning support professionals and notes the importance of their role in the development of curricula. The author asserts that the learning support professional is instrumental in "establishing inclusive schools... for the purpose of co-ordinating the necessary provision for learners experiencing barriers to learning in the whole school". Guidelines provided by the Department of Education (2008:25) are:

- Training institution-level support teams in all schools in the broad and specific principles and approaches to addressing barriers to learning and development - focusing to a large extent on curriculum delivery for diverse learner needs.
- Assisting educators in specific interventions for individual learners with high support needs.
- Providing direct support to learners in terms of specialised interventions.
- Co-ordinating the services of the extended network of support staff e.g. staff from resource schools, full service schools, social and health officials, etc.

In conclusion, the Department of Education (2005b:22) provides the following guidelines regarding the competencies of learning support professionals that could serve as criteria:



- Acting as assessors of needs and barriers to learning at individual (learner and educator), organisational and broader system levels,
- Acting as researchers/evaluators to identify resources in and outside of the schools and other education institutions and
- Ability to monitor and evaluate programmes in and outside of specific institutions.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter serves as a literature control of the findings that will be discussed in Chapter 4. The next chapter will focus on the implementation of the research methodology that provided the framework from which the data that informed the findings.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Research methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The research problem that formed the foundation of the present study, together with the research questions and aim and objectives of the research was discussed in Chapter 1. The chosen research methodology to address the research problem was also provided in Chapter 1. In order to ensure the validity of the qualitative data in terms of applicability and consistency, a through in-depth description of the implementation of the research methodology is needed (see Shurink et al., 2011:419). Therefore, the description of the choices made related to the research methodology in this chapter is supplemented by an in-depth description of the implementation in this chapter.

The next section provides a description of the research methodology that was implemented to assist the researcher to address the research problem, to answer the research question and to attain the aim of the research.

#### **3.2 Research methodology**

The term “research methodology” refers to the “*systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study*” (Berg, 2009:5). For the purpose of this study, it refers to the methods and techniques that were used during the research process and the phases of the qualitative research approach that were followed. The subsections below provide a description of the implementation of the research methodology in this research study.

##### **3.2.1 Research approach**

The nature of the research problem and research questions (see Chapter 1) directed the researcher’s choice to work from a qualitative research approach for the purpose of this research study. The aim of this study was to explore and describe the nature

of learning support in rural schools from the perspectives of learning support professionals and teachers. The use of qualitative data was viewed as the most appropriate way to answer the research questions, and to reach the aim of this study. The qualitative research approach was furthermore viewed as appropriate based on the following characteristics of this approach, as described by Kreuger and Neuman (2006:16):

**Table 3.1:** Characteristics of the qualitative research approach

Characteristic	Relevance to this study
It assists the researcher with the construction of social reality and/or cultural meaning	The perspectives and experiences of the population
It focus on interactive processes and/or events	Explorative and descriptive in nature
The authentic nature of the qualitative data is viewed as the key criterion of scientific excellence	The use of data verification strategies
It is done within a specific context (situational constraint)	Rural schools
The population and sample size are not as big as in quantitative research studies	Data saturation determines the sample size
It consists of a thematic analysis that leads to increased understanding of the topic under investigation	Use of the coding system to identify themes, sub-themes and categories
The involvement of the researcher is acceptable	Data collecting through semi-structured interviews

The mentioned characteristics of the qualitative research approach also informed the researcher's choice of research designs. The implementation thereof will be discussed next.

### 3.2.2 Research design

Research designs in qualitative research studies involve the following aspects:

- A set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied,
- On what population the study will focus,
- What research methods and techniques will be used and
- For what purpose these methods and techniques will be used (Babbie, 2007:112).

Based on the aim of this research study, and in order to answer the research question, the researcher chose the contextual, exploratory and descriptive research designs to guide his choice of methods and techniques during this research study.

The discussion below provides a theoretical description of these designs that supported the choice thereof and an illustration of how these designs informed the researcher's choices of research methods and techniques.

### **3.2.2.1 Contextual research design**

This design enabled the researcher to obtain data within the specific context of the research problem. It placed the qualitative data within the natural environment of the participants and contributed to the richness of the data (Holztblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2005:22). The contextual research design assisted the researcher to make choices regarding the population and sampling methods and techniques, as well as regarding the method of data collection. The choice of method of data collection, based on the use of the contextual research design, assisted him to identify unexpected needs or challenges experienced by the participants. The value of this design was therefore that assumptions related to the experiences of the participants could be re-evaluated as the "voices" of the participants (i.e. the people who are living within the research problem) could be heard. The use of this design asked for a semi-structured method of data collection, to ensure rich data that would contribute to a better description and understanding of the participants' situation.

### **3.2.2.2 Exploratory research design**

The explorative research design was used to guide the process of exploring the experiences of the participants. This design is specifically appropriate when little knowledge is available in a specific field. The situation of learning support in rural schools in South Africa is currently not well documented, and therefore the need for an exploration of the experiences of teachers and learning support professionals was identified (Rubin and Babbie, 2005:123; Kumar, 2005:10). An exploration of the participants' experiences would thus contribute towards knowledge and insight regarding the research topic, and provide learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities with recommendations to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools. The use of this

research design specifically assisted the researcher with the choices related to sampling methods and techniques and the method of data collection\_(Babbie, 2007:87). The purposive sampling technique ensured that the participants were included in the samples based on the fact that they were able to answer the research questions through semi-structured interviews.

### **3.2.2.3 Descriptive research design**

The decision to include the descriptive research design was based on the aim to provide learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities with recommendations to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools (Rubin and Babbie, 2005:124; Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee, 2006:43). The descriptive design also assisted the researcher with the choice of method of data analysis. A coding system was chosen that assisted the researcher to identify themes, sub-themes and categories that would form a storyline to answer the research question.

As explained above, the research designs guided the researcher with regards to the methods and techniques of sampling, method of data collection and method of data analysis. These aspects will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

### **3.2.3 Population and sampling**

In order to obtain the data, the researcher first had to identify the population and sample to be included in this research study. It resulted in the ability to obtain a representative sample of insiders in the situation that were best suited to answer the research questions. The following table provides a description of the terms population, sampling, sampling method and sampling techniques and of how it was implemented in this research study:

**Table 3.2: Sampling concepts**

Description		Implementation
<b>Population</b>	Fox and Bayat (2007:52) describe the <b>population</b> of a research study as a total unit from which a sample is selected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population 1:</b> All teachers at rural schools in the Western Cape</li> <li>• <b>Population 2:</b> All learning support professionals at rural schools in the Western Cape</li> </ul>
<b>Sample</b>	A sample comprises of elements or a subset of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. It can also be viewed as a subset of measurements, drawn from a population in which the researcher is interested (Unrau, Gabor and Grinnell, 2007:279).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sample from Population 1:</b> All Grade 1 to 6 teachers at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5)</li> <li>• <b>Sample from Population 2:</b> All learning support professionals at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5) who are qualified teachers with a minimum experience of two years in learning support</li> </ul>

<b>Sampling method</b>	In the non-probability sampling method, the odds of selecting a particular individual are not known; because the researcher does not know the population size or the members of the population at the beginning of the research study (Gravetter and Forzano, 2009:118). An important component of assessing qualitative data is data saturation. Nixon and Wild (2013) concurs that "failure to achieve data saturation severely impedes the quality of the research". The authors advise that correct and thorough documentation of data and the continuous evaluation of data through a scientific analysis process is essential. " <i>Data saturation is determined as the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no new information</i> ".	The possibility to be chosen to be included in the samples could not be determined at the onset of this research study. The size of the samples could thus not be determined at the beginning of the research study, and was determined by data saturation. Data saturation was detected after 7 interviews with teachers and after 12 interviews with learning support professionals. The researcher, however, continued with two more interviews per group to ensure that no new data came to the fore. The sample sizes were therefore 9 teachers and 14 learning support professionals.
<b>Sampling technique</b>	Rubin and Babbie (2005:247) state that the purposive sampling technique, typically used in the non-probability sampling method, is also called judgemental sampling, as it requires the	The researcher opted for the criteria to be included in the sample (described above) to ensure that all the participants were able to answer the

	judgement of the researcher (as an integrate part of the qualitative research approach – see Table 2.1) to identify who would be most suitable to answer the research questions.	research questions as they were working in the field related to the research topic.
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The next step was to collect the data from the participants included in the sample.

### **3.2.4 Method of data collection**

The choice of method of data collection includes the preparation prior to data collection, the choice of type of method to collect the data, the identification of relevant questions to ask and interviewing techniques to use, a pilot study and the recording of the data. The implementation of all the mentioned aspects will be described in the sub-sections below.

#### **3.2.4.1 Preparations for data collection**

The researcher firstly obtained permission to conduct this research from the Western Cape Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Once permission was obtained and the sample was selected, the researcher made contact with all the learning support professionals in Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5), as well as teachers at the schools where these professionals were working by means of a formal invitation letter (see Annexure A). This letter explained –

- the purpose of the study,
- why they were viewed as able to answer the research questions,
- the format of data collection and
- ethical considerations.

Appointments were made with those who were willing to participate. Before the data was collected the participants were requested to sign an informed letter of consent (see Annexure B).

#### **3.2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Methods of data collection in qualitative research studies include the use of individual interviews (which could be face-to-face, telephonic, etc.) and focus groups. The fundamental types of interviews used in both methods are structured, semi-

structured or unstructured in nature (Creswell, 2009:179-181). These types are distinguished from one another by means of the following characteristics of each (Gill and Stewart, 2008:292):

- **Structured interviews:** This type of data collection could be viewed as essentially a verbally administered questionnaire. It consists of a list of predetermined questions, with little or no variation and scope for follow-up questions or further elaboration. This is a quicker way to gather data, but the richness of the data could be less, because of the fact that clarification and probing cannot take place.
- **Semi-structured interviews:** The qualitative researcher develops a list of questions related to the research problem and research question. These questions are used to ensure focus, but are not preventing the participant to elaborate or to provide information that was not asked. It could be viewed as a “focused discussion of the research problem/topic”. The researcher makes use of interview techniques to ensure that the participant explores all possible answers/viewpoints that could contribute to the richness of the data.
- **Unstructured interviews:** Unstructured interviews take place when the researcher provides the participant with one broad question related to the research problem. The researcher then makes use of interview techniques to stimulate the exploration of the research problem and topic. This type of interview could, however, lead to deviation from the specific focus of the interview.

Based on the above description, the researcher opted to make use of **semi-structured interviews**. The value of the semi-structured type of interview was that the researcher could ensure that the focus of the discussion remained on the research topic and the research problem. In addition, it provided enough scope for further elaboration and expansion to ensure richness of data that related to the aim of this research study. This aim was to explore the participants’ experiences, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of their social reality (Gill and Stewart, 2008:293).

### **3.2.4.3 Interview schedule**

As described above, the researcher made use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews to collect the qualitative research data. The interview schedule included



the questions that were identified as relevant to the research topic, questions and aim (as provided in Chapter 1), as well as the structure of the interviews.

The interviews with teachers were conducted at the schools where they worked, and in private and comfortable areas at times that suited the participants best. The interviews with the learning support professionals took place at a private and comfortable venue provided by the Western Cape Department of Education at convenient times for the participants.

The researcher started the interviews with casual conversation to put the participants at ease. He then again explained the purpose of the interview with the participants and placed emphasis on the fact that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time. Once the researcher was sure that the participant was comfortable, he started the interview with the demographic information pertaining to the specific participant and then continued with data collection.

#### **3.2.4.4 Interview techniques**

The quantity and quality of data often depends on the skills of the interviewer (Monnette, Sullivan and De Jong, 2005:178). In order to ensure that the researcher obtained rich data and that he does not influence the answers of the participants the following research **interviewing techniques** were used (Greeff, 2011:345):

- The researcher asked one question at a time.
- The researcher clarified answers where he was not sure of the meaning.
- He repeated key questions throughout the interview.
- Participants were given time to reflect on their answers, allowing for pauses in the conversation.
- The researcher returned to incomplete points, probing for more information or detail.
- He concluded interviews with general questions such as: “Is there anything further that you feel is important?”

#### **3.2.4.5 Pilot study**

The researcher first conducted one interview with a participant from both samples who adhered to the inclusion criteria to ensure that the questions that were asked were understood, that the participants would be able to answer and discuss these questions and to ensure that the research question was answered (Maxwell, 2008:227). This data was then transcribed and analysed. A discussion with the supervisor followed, after which it was decided that the method of data collection, as well as the questions, would indeed assist the researcher to answer the research question and to attain the research goal. These interviews did not form part of the formal data collection, and only served as a method to ensure that the method of data collection would be effective in this present study. Following the pilot interviews, the researcher continued with data collection.

#### **3.2.4.6 Method of data recording**

The researcher made use of tape recordings to record the interviews. All the participants gave their permission that the interviews could be recorded with the understanding that only the researcher and his supervisor would have access to the tape recordings. Additional data was obtained by means of field notes, focusing on aspects such as communication patterns and non-verbal communication to add to the transcripts in order to complete the data collection (Creswell, 2009:181-183). The tape recordings and the field notes were transcribed as soon as possible following the interviews.

The researcher sent the transcriptions to the independent coder as soon as they were completed. The independent coder assisted the researcher to identify when data saturation took place. It should be noted that no discussions related to the content of the transcriptions took place during this time. Once the data was collected, the researcher proceeded with the analysis process.

#### **3.2.5 Method of data analysis**

The qualitative researcher must consider that the analysis of qualitative data requires some kind of transformation. During qualitative data analysis, the researcher starts with all the data, and then makes use of analytic procedures to transform this data into a “*clear, understandable, insightful, trustworthy and even original analysis*”

(Gibbs, 2007:1). In this study the researcher used the scientific procedures described through the eight steps of qualitative data analysis in the framework provided by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186). These steps ensured a systematic manner of data analysis. This framework consists of eight steps. The steps, and the implementation thereof, are described and discussed below.

1. The researcher forms an overall picture obtained by carefully reading through all the transcripts and jots down in writing the ideas that emerged. The researcher went through all the transcripts after data saturation was detected. He wrote down ideas and those aspects that stood out next to the scripts.
2. The first transcript is then selected and read once more. The researcher asks him/herself: "What is this about?" Thoughts are plotted in a margin. The researcher started again with the reading process, and wrote down main words that stood out in the text that related to the research problem.
3. The rest of the transcripts are overviewed by working in the same way. Next, a list is made of all the topics indicated in the margin. Similar topics are grouped together into columns, which consist of main themes and sub-themes. All the main words that were identified were written down, once all the transcripts were examined. These words were then grouped in topics which became the main themes. The researcher carefully looked at the words in the different topics, and identified the sub-themes that emerged from each topic.
4. The list of themes and sub-themes are returned to the transcripts. Codes are given to the topics and sub-topics are added along the appropriate segments in the text. There is also at this stage, a check-out for new/hidden topics or codes. The researcher then gave code names to the themes and sub-themes and placed this next to the words in the margin of the text in the transcripts. During this process he made sure that all the main words were placed in a theme/sub-theme, and identified new themes/sub-themes in the process. He then gave codes for the themes and sub-themes and added it to the text.
5. The most descriptive wording is selected for topics and converted into categories. Similar topics are sub-themed under the relevant category. The researcher then continued to provide a description for each theme and sub-theme that described it the best.
6. A final decision is made regarding which categories to be included. A discussion with the supervisor and independent coder (who followed the same process)

followed to identify what themes and sub-themes to include in the final analyses. This decision was based on the aim of the study to ensure that the research questions would be answered.

7. Corresponding data is placed under each category to highlight the themes and sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes were then placed in an order that would serve as the storyline to describe the experiences of the participants. Verbatim responses that related to the themes/sub-themes were then placed under each theme/sub-theme.
8. The themes and sub-themes are then discussed and described. The content of each theme and sub-theme was then discussed, based on the responses of the participants, and verified with the literature (literature control).

The data was also analysed, according to the same framework, by an independent coder to ensure that data verification took place. In addition to the research methods and techniques described above, the researcher also ensured that the qualitative data is verified.

### **3.2.6 Method of data verification**

A challenge in qualitative research is that qualitative research studies do not make use of the traditional criteria for validity of research, namely internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. The criteria used in qualitative research studies are described by Schurink et al. (2011:429) as credibility, transferability, reliability and conformability as criteria to use in qualitative research studies. Guba's model for the verification of qualitative data (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) was used as a framework to ensure the validity of a qualitative research study. Based on the latter model, the criteria that were used in this present research study were: Truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. The implementation of the criteria is illustrated in the table below.

**Table 3.3:** Data verification

<b>Method of data verification</b>	<b>Strategy that was followed</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
<b>Truth value</b>	The level of confidence in the truth of the findings, based on the research design, participants and the context in which the study was undertaken will determine the truth value of the study (Krefting, 1991:215).	The researcher implemented this strategy of data verification by using the interview techniques to determine the truth value of the study. The researcher also made use of two populations (i.e. triangulation through the use of more than one source of data) to obtain access to a wider variety of participants to ensure the truth value of this study.
<b>Applicability</b>	Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216) refers to applicability as the degree to which the findings of the research study are applicable to other contexts or groups.	The researcher provided a thorough description of the research methodology implemented in this chapter to ensure that the research data and findings could be applicable to other contexts. The purposive sampling technique further contributed to the applicability of the data.
<b>Consistency</b>	Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216) refers to consistency as “whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context”.	The researcher implemented this strategy of data verification by using the coding system that entails the qualitative data is coded to assist the researcher to identify themes and sub-themes. The same coding system was implemented by the independent coder, which further ensured the consistency of the findings. A thick description of the research methodology, provided in this chapter, also contributed to the consistency.
<b>Neutrality</b>	Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216-217) state that neutrality in qualitative research should reflect the neutrality of the required data, rather than that of the researcher.	The researcher transcribed the verbatim responses of the participants, and added field notes to the transcripts. The transcripts ensured that the “voices of the participants” led to the findings, and that the researcher’s own interpretations did not influence the results. The use of an independent coder also contributed to the neutrality of this present study.

This study also included the implementation of principles of ethical research, which will be discussed next.

### 3.3 Ethical considerations

The term “research ethics” implies the following:

- Preferences that influence behaviour in human relationships,
- Conforming to a code of principles,
- The rules of conduct,
- The responsibility of the researcher and
- The standards of conduct of a given profession (Babbie, 2007:62).

The ethical considerations that were taken into account during this study were described in terms of the literature in Chapter 1. In this chapter, the ethical consideration, together with the implementation will be illustrated in the table below.

**Figure 3.4:** Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration	Outcome
Do not harm	In order to ensure that no harm was done to participants based on this research study, the researcher conducted the interviews in a private environment at a time that was convenient for the participants. In addition, the privacy of participants was respected (see below) and participants were made aware of the possible risks and advantages of participation (see Annexure B).
Privacy	The researcher informed participants that they could decide what to share and what not to share. In addition, their names would not appear on the transcripts and the use of the independent coder will ensure that their responses formed part of a “general storyline” derived from all the responses. The method of data analysis supported this aspect and ensured that, although the geographical area is known, individual responses are not provided. The participants were informed in this regard.
Confidentiality	The researcher assured the participants that only he, the supervisor and the independent coder would have access to the transcripts. The tape recordings, consent forms and transcripts would be stored in a safe place; and these documents would be destroyed once the research study is completed and approved.
Informed consent	The researcher provided participants with a written invitation with all the relevant information (see Annexure A) and participants were requested to sign an informed consent form once they agree to participate and had no further questions (see Annexure B).

The implementation of the research methodology and the findings of the study should be viewed within the context of the challenges that were experienced during the course of the research process. This will be discussed next.

### 3.4 Challenges regarding the study

Most of the participants in this study represented the female gender. The descriptions and findings are therefore primarily based on a female perspective, which could be viewed as a limitation. The researcher was challenged with regards to finding suitable times for the interviews, as the teachers and learning support professionals were only available to do interviews when no school activities took place.

### **3.5 Summary**

Chapter 1 provided the introduction, a background to the research study, the clarification of concepts, the problem formulation, the theoretical framework, research question, research aims and objectives, a description of the choice of research methodology, the ethical considerations and the conclusion. Chapter 2 presented a literature review that was used a literature control of the findings in this present study.

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology followed, with a description of the procedures that were implemented to collect, analyse and verify the data obtained from the participants. It also reflects on the ethical considerations and the challenges experienced during this research study.

Chapter 4 that follows will provide the reader with a description of the biographical profile of the participants and the research findings, together with a literature control.

## CHAPTER 4

### Research findings

#### 4.1 Introduction

The research problem that informed this study was provided in Chapter 1 of this document. The following research questions emanated from the research problem: *What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by learning support professionals? What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by teachers?* In order to answer these questions, and to address the research problem the research aim was to explore and describe the nature of learning support in rural schools based on the perspectives and experiences of teachers and learning support professionals, in order to provide learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities with recommendations to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools.

This research was conducted from the qualitative research approach to develop an understanding of the experiences of the nature of learning support in rural schools. The exploratory, descriptive and contextual research designs were furthermore utilised to assist the researcher with a framework that assisted him to attain the research goal.

Fourteen learning support professionals and nine primary school educators and principals at Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5) participated in this research study. The participants were identified by means of the purposive sampling technique to ensure that the research question would be answered by persons in the real-life setting of this research study. The findings, based on the data obtained from the two sample groups, will be discussed in this chapter. The findings for each group will be described separately. A comparison of the two sets of data will be made in the final chapter of this document. The demographic profile of the participating learning



support professionals and teachers will be provided next, after which the findings will be presented.

The findings were also subjected to a literature control. This entailed a review of literature that supported or contradicted the findings of this present research study. The literature review was provided in Chapter 2 of this research report. In order to prevent repetition, cross references to the literature that has been discussed will be provided.

## 4.2 Demographic data

The demographic data discussed in this section provides a description of the context within which the findings were procured. The table below describes the demographic data of the participants:

**Table 4.1:** Demographic data of participants

<b>Learning support professionals</b>				
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Years' experience</b>
1	40	female	white	17
2	53	female	coloured	30
3	47	female	coloured	20
4	65	female	white	37
5	45	female	coloured	17
6	27	female	coloured	2
7	44	female	coloured	15
8	50	female	white	25
9	54	female	white	27
10	52	female	white	30
11	49	female	white	20
12	48	female	white	25
13	45	female	white	20
14	28	female	white	4
<b>Teachers</b>				
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Years' experience</b>
1	43	female	coloured	20
2	54	female	coloured	32
3	40	female	coloured	20
4	50	female	coloured	22
5	57	female	coloured	25
6	46	male	coloured	24
7	49	male	coloured	20
8	57	female	coloured	29
9	55	female	coloured	30

In the learning support professionals group none of the participants were male and in the teachers group two of the participants were male. The two male participants were the principals of participating schools and they also taught Grades 5 and 6. This trend is in line with available national statistics. In 2005, 29% of teachers were male and 71% were female (Department of Education, 2005a:58-59). The Department of Education (2005a:59) reported that, although teachers are mostly female, they are still under presented in management in the schools system. It should be noted that the purposive sampling technique that was based on the contextual research design, as well as the ethical practice of voluntary participation also may have influenced this aspect.

In both participating groups the average age was between 40 and 60 years. In the learning support professionals group, two of the participants were under the age of 30 while the other participants were between the ages of 40 and 65. One of the participants went on retirement two months after being interviewed. In the teachers group all the participants was between the age of 40 and 60. Nationally, 21% of teachers are under the age of 40, while 36% falls in the age group between 40 and 50 years and 12% in the age group of 50 years and older (Department of Education, 2005a:61). The mentioned statistics therefore confirm the age distribution of the participants as in line with national trends in the education system.

In the teachers group all the participants were coloured and in the learning support professionals group nine of the participants were white and five of the participants were coloured. According to Statistics South Africa (2011) 48.8% of the Western Cape population is coloured, 32.7% is black, 15.7% is white and 1% is Asian. Although this distribution is not in line with the profile of the participants, the contextual nature of this study should be noted, which could have influenced the profile. Vandeyar (2010:344) furthermore notes that the student profile must be taken into account when the dynamics on micro-level is addressed by policymakers.

Most of the participants in both groups had long-term experience in education and special education. In the learning support professionals group two of the participants had less than 10 years' experience, while the rest had between 15 and 40 years'

experience in special education. In the teachers group the participants had experience of between 20 and 32 years in teaching.

In addition to the years of experience, the Department of Basic Education (2013a:55) reports that 97% of teachers in the Western Cape were qualified to a satisfactory degree. The Department of Education (2005a:67) asserts that “...*qualified teachers are amongst a school’s most valuable resources as they contribute towards ensuring quality education. However, teacher qualifications are only one of the input factors for quality education. Teacher’s competence is a combination of academic knowledge and methodology - academic skills are not enough to have a positive influence on the students’ results, and a broader teaching competence is also necessary*”.

The findings regarding learning support professional’s experiences and perceptions of learning support in rural schools will be presented next.

#### **4.3 Findings: Learning support professionals’ perceptions and experiences related to the nature of learning support in rural schools**

The themes, sub-themes and categories will be described, together with verbatim quotations and the literature control. **Please note:** All of the participants provided the information in Afrikaans. In order to ensure that the findings are presented as accurately as possible the Afrikaans quotations were not translated for the purpose of this document.

Five main themes provide the story line for the data obtained from the participants, namely: 1) Participants’ understanding of the term ‘learning support’; 2) their descriptions of the nature of learning support; 3) perceptions of the value of learning support; 4) aspects that are perceived as limitations regarding the provision of learning support and 5) descriptions of what is needed for effective learning support to take place. The themes, sub-themes and categories are illustrated in the table below:

**Table 4.2:** Themes and, sub-themes categories

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
Theme 1: Participants' understanding of the term 'learning support'		
Theme 2: Participants' descriptions of the nature of learning support	Sub-theme 2.1: A description of how learners are identified to receive learning support	Category 2.1.1: A description of the learners who receive learning support
	Sub-theme 2.2: A description of how learning support is planned	
	Sub-theme 2.3 Learning support is primarily provided in a group context	
	Sub-theme 2.4: Learning support is provided differently in terms of grades	
	Sub-theme 2.5: Learning support professionals work at more than one school	
	Sub-theme 2.6: A description of feedback procedures	
	Sub-theme 2.7: Support services available to learning support professionals	
Theme 3: Participants' perceptions of the value of learning support	Sub-theme 3.1: Specialised support outside of the classroom environment	Category 3.1.1: Learners with needs for learning support are provided with individual support in a relaxed environment that contributes to positive self-esteem
	Sub-theme 3.2: Support to teachers	Category 3.2.1: Planning and coordination with the curriculum is of value to the learning support professional
Theme 4: Aspects that are perceived as limitations regarding the provision of learning support	Sub-theme 4.1: Working with large groups limits the quality of attention to individual learners	
	Sub-theme 4.2: Learning support professionals find it difficult to deliver services at more than one school	
	Sub-theme 4.3: A lack of infrastructure and resources are reported	
	Sub-theme 4.4: Collaboration between the learning support professional and the teacher is lacking	
	Sub-theme 4.5: Unavailability of the learning support advisor or lack of coordination by the learning support advisor	
	Sub-theme 4.6: A lack of alternative assessments and options to develop alternative skills among learners with learning needs	
Theme 5: Learning support professionals' descriptions of what is needed for effective learning support	Sub-theme 5.1: Learning support professionals should work at one school only	Category 5.1.1: Learning support should be provided in small groups to ensure individual attention

to take place		
	Sub-theme 5.2: Learning support professionals should be involved in the overall progress of the learner	
	Sub-theme 5.3: Specific criteria for learning support are needed and should be communicated to the schools	Category 5.3.1: Cooperation and communication between all role-players should be ensured
	Sub-theme 5.4: Support from the learning support advisors and collaboration with curriculum advisors are needed	Category 5.4.1: In-service training opportunities for learning support professionals should be created
	Sub-theme 5.5: Support services and resources should be available to learning support professionals	
	Sub-theme 5.6: Learning support professionals should receive specific recognition to enable them to make recommendations	
	Sub-theme 5.7: Specialised subjects to enable holistic progress should be included in learning support programmes	

These themes, sub-themes and categories are presented next.

### **Theme 1: Participants' understanding of the term 'learning support'**

Participants described learning support as a form of support to both teachers and learners, and added that it is not aimed at a specific level and that it could be done in separate groups or in the classroom.

*“Dit is om opvoeders te ondersteun met hul probleme en om leerders wat sukkel in enige vak te help in groepe van ongeveer 10, klassikaal of individueel.”*

*“Leerondersteuning sien ek as leerondersteuning aan die leerders en die onderwysers ten opsigte van die kurrikulum asook alle sake met betrekking tot progressie en promosie.”*

Learning support should be based on a) the needs of the different learners in b) different schools, as well as c) the expectations of the Department of Basic Education. The following comments illustrate this viewpoint.

*“Leerondersteuning moet buigzaam wees en elke skool sal verskil.”*

*“Dit is ook baie belangrik om altyd in ag te neem dat alle leerders kan leer, maar teen hul eie tempo en volgens hul eie leerstyl.”*

*“Ek het aanvanklik net geletterdheid met die leerders gedoen, want dit is die grootste behoefte, maar die departement het ons nou gedwing om ook wiskunde te gee. Ek gaan dus nou een keer ‘n week vir ‘n graad 1 groep wiskunde gee tydens onttrekking. Die skole verkies egter dat ek geletterdheid gee.”*

*“Hulle [Department of Education] wil hê ons moet in graad 3 die gemiddelde groep leerders onttrek om hulle geletterdheid op te skerp, maar sommige onderwysers wil graag hê ons moet die heel swak leerders ondersteun.”*

The statements point to a frustration in terms of working according to different expectations from the Department of Basic Education and the different schools, and to combine these expectations with the needs of the learners. The participants also referred to extra responsibilities at schools to ensure the provision of services at schools (cf. White Paper on Education and Training, 1995):

*“Ek bedryf ook ‘n hulpbronsentrum vanuit die skool.”*

*“Ek werk by drie skole en bedryf ook hulle hulpbronsentrums en biblioteke.”*

The participants also described learners support as a means to develop potential:

*“Dit is om leerders wat seker agterstande het te help sodat hulle by die res van die klas se funksioneringsvlak kan kom.”*

*“Dit moet spesifieke leemtes aanspreek en kan verbeter. “*

*“Dit behels ondersteuning om die kind te neem op sy eie vlak van kognitiewe ontwikkeling en dit beteken ook om ‘n positiewe leeromgewing te skep, waar hierdie leerder tot sy maksimale potensiaal kan ontwikkel, sonder enige druk van die kurrikulum.”*

*“Leerondersteuning beteken vir my om reg te maak wat verkeerd is , om dit reg te maak wat iewers verkeerd gegaan het. Dit kan ‘n taalagterstand wees. Daar is niks verkeerd met die kind nie. Die kind het heel moontlik verhuis en voorheen in Engels onderrig ontvang en nou moet die leerder in Afrikaans onderrig ontvang.”*

*“Dit beteken om leerders met sekere leerstoornisse emosioneel en skolasties te ondersteun op ‘n intensiewer vlak en om daardie leemtes te vul wat gemaak het dat die leerder nie sy volle potensiaal bereik nie.”*

Specific focus areas of learning support were highlighted in terms of reading, spelling and mathematics (cf. Van der Berg et al, 2011:1, JET Education services, 2010):

*“Leerondersteuning is om leerders in die hoofstroom met geletterdheids- en wiskunde – vaardighede te ondersteun.”*

*“Aangesien perseptuele vaardighede nie op peil by baie leerders is nie, moet baie ondersteuning ook op hierdie vlak gegee word.”*

*“Leerondersteuning is die hulp wat aan leerders aangebied word wat ondersteuning benodig met spelling, lees en wiskunde.”*

## **Theme 2: Participant’s descriptions of the nature of learning support**

This theme describes how learners who need learning support are identified together with a description of such learners. The planning of learning support is described and the nature of learning support is illustrated in terms of a group context; provided differently in terms of grades, subjects or in mainstream and skills training classes; and professionals delivering services at different schools. The theme is concluded with a description of feedback procedures and support services available to learning support professionals.

### **Sub-theme 2.1: A description of how learners are identified to receive learning support**

Specific assessments are conducted to identify learners who qualify for learning support and involve an interaction between the teacher and the learning support professional.

*“Die klasopvoeder identifiseer leerders na afloop van haar grondlynassessering.”*

*“Die opvoeders gee aan die leerondersteuningsopvoeder die name van die leerders wat leerondersteuning benodig. Die leerondersteuningsopvoeder doen dan diagnostiese assesseringstoetse met hierdie leerders om te kyk op watter vlak elke leerder is.”*

*“Die leerders word verwys vir leerondersteuning – ek doen dan ook ‘n toetsing om leemtes te identifiseer en ‘n program op te stel waarvolgens ek kan werk.”*

*“Die leerondersteuningsopvoeder gaan in gesprek met die klasopvoeders en bepaal wie die leerders is wat sukkel. Daarna gebruik sy assesseringstoets en assesseeer hulle.”*

The Department of Education’s Operational Manual to the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2008:22) stipulates that teachers, parents and learners should form part of the assessment and support process. From the descriptions provided by the participants, assessments do not involve the parents of the learners, and the social context is not a primary focus of the assessments. It does, however, according the following statements involve a team process. The specifically focused on the Teacher Support Team (TST) and the School Based Support Team (SBST). These descriptions relate to stipulations in the Education White Paper 6 (2001) and provided by the Department of Education (2005b:5, 8).

*“Die graad 2 tot 4 leerders word onttrek na aanleiding van die behoeftebepaling wat die OOS-span/SGOS-span [Teacher Support Team (TSTs)/School Based Support Team (SBSTs)] gemaak het.”*

*“Ons hou OOS-span/SGOS-span vergaderings [TSTs/SBSTs] met elke graadhoof. Die skool is te groot en dus kan ons nie met elke klasopvoeder vergaderings hou nie.”*

*“Ek werk met die OOS/SGOS [TSTs/SBSTs] met verwysings wat ek al die vorige jaar ontvang het en ek werk ook van die skedules af. Ek kry byvoorbeeld 40 leerders per graad wat ek mee moet werk.”*

*“Leerders word nie na my verwys sonder dat hulle nie deur die OOS/SGOS-span [TSTs/SBSTs] verwys word nie.”*

The participants provided a description of the learners who receive learning support, which will be described in the category below.

### **Category 2.1.1: A description of the learners who receive learning support**

The following statements describe the learners’ biological, social and family challenges (cf. Department of Education, 2005b):



*“Ek werk meestal met kinders wat minderbevoorreg is en wat geen stimulasie by die huis kry nie.”*

*“Baie van my leerders was fetale alkohol sindroom babas gewees.”*

*“Meeste van hierdie leerders se ouers is ook ongeletterd.”*

The reference to parental illiteracy and learners with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome are supported by as a barrier to learning is an international concern the National Illiteracy Action Project (2007:1), Cree et al. (2012:6) and in Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (2013:15-16).

Some participants explained that learners often only need support in a specific area where learning barriers are experienced. Language of Teaching and Learning (LOTL) as a learning barrier is mentioned in this regard (cf. Foley, 2010:2; Department of Basic Education, 2012).

*“Leerondersteuning is vir normale leerders, maar in ‘n bepaalde afdeling presteer hierdie leerders nie na wense nie en soms moet hierdie leerders net gedeeltelike ondersteuning ontvang. Die leerder kan byvoorbeeld lees, maar hy kan nie spel nie of hy kan wiskunde doen, maar hy kan nie lees nie.”*

*“Sommige leerders het leerondersteuning nodig omdat Afrikaans nie hul huistaal is nie.”*

The participants also noted that learners experience specific challenges in the mainstream classroom.

*“Dit is ondersteuning wat gebied word aan die leerders wat nie die pas in die hoofstroomklas kan volhou nie.”*

*“Ek voel die sisteem faal hierdie kinders. Daar word gesê klasse moet inklusief wees. Leerders is nie volwassenes nie. Hulle [learners in mainstream classes] is ongenaakbaar teenoor mekaar.”*

The Education White Paper 6 (2001) highlights that, in an inclusive education system, different learning needs should be equally valued, despite differences in learners, whether due to age; gender; ethnicity, language; class, disability or HIV status. The White Paper emphasises that education structures need to be enabled to reflect inclusive values. Related to the reference to discrimination by peers, the

participants provided a description of their perceptions related to the learners' experiences of receiving learning support.

*“Die graad 3 leerders voel dikwels skaam om vir leerondersteuning te kom en hulle is die heeltyd bewus van wie hulle sien ingaan by die leerondersteuningsklas.”*

*“Die graad 1 en 2 leerders is weer mal oor leerondersteuning. Dit voel vir hulle soos ‘n spesiale periode, want daar word baie aandag aan hulle gegee en hulle is minder leerders bymekaar.”*

Within the context of the description of in this theme, the next theme will focus on the planning of learning support services.

### **Sub-theme 2.2: A description of how learning support is planned**

The statements below illustrates that the planning is based on the outcomes of assessment, that assessments are on-going and that planning also involves the teachers (cf. Ladbrook, 2009:4).

*“In die begin van die jaar doen ek diagnostiese assesserings met al hierdie leerders en dan gebruik ek die inligting wat ek verkry uit die assesserings om die leerders in verskillende groepe te verdeel volgens hulle vlak.”*

*“Ek stel ‘n rooster op wat aanpas by die opvoeders se roosters. Ek onttrek die leerders en in sommige gevalle beweeg ek in die klas in en ondersteun klassikaal.”*

*“Ek beplan saam met die klasopvoeders sodat ons mekaar kan aanvul. Vaslegging lewer vir my sukses.”*

*“In die begin van die jaar gaan sit ek met die skool se skedule en onttrek dan die leerders wat in elke graad lae kodes behaal het. Terwyl ek met hierdie leerders werk, hou ek rekord en ek kyk of dit wat ek by die leerders waarneem ooreenstem met die kodes wat hulle in die hoofstroomklasse behaal het.”*

The following two sub-themes depict the nature of learning support.

### **Sub-theme 2.3: Learning support is primarily provided in a group context**

The participants referred to a more individual focus in terms of small groups, as well as larger groups in which learning support is provided (cf. Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:793-828).

*“Dit geskied individueel en in groepe en is spesifiek geskoei op elke leerder se individuele behoeftes.”*

*“Soms groepe van vier tot agt in grootte. Dit is meer individueel en op die kind se spesifieke behoeftes gemik.”*

*“Die kleiner groepies werk baie goed vir my, want ek kan meer individuele aandag aan die leerders gee, meer sukses word behaal en die leerders kry meer selfvertroue omdat hulle werk doen wat op hulle vlak is.”*

*“Die intieme kontak met die kleingroepies werk goed. Die leerders is nie skaam om te praat nie en ook nie bang om te sê as hulle sukkel of nog nie verstaan nie. Ons kan ook verder gaan indien hulle nie verstaan nie. Daar is nie tyd wat ons jaag nie.”*

Other descriptions of the nature of group work as a method in learning support are -

*“In my beginjare as remediërende onderwyseres het ons leerders met gemiddelde intellektuele vermoëns in ‘n een tot een situasie gehelp, maar in die latere jare toe dit na leerondersteuning verander het, moes ons hoofsaaklik leerders met laer intellektuele vermoëns akkomodeer en met groepe van 10 werk.”*

*“Leerders word vir ‘n uur-periode uit die klas onttrek in groepe van 10.”*

The following statement explains the time-frame of learning support group sessions:

*“Groepe word elkeen vir ongeveer 40 minute onttrek.”* However, the statements that follow provide a description that this time-frame is not experienced as effective:

*“Die min kontaktyd met die leerders is moeilik. Ek sien my groepe net twee keer ‘n week vir ‘n uur.”*

*“Die verskillende vlakke van die leerders binne ‘n kleingroepie is baie uitdagend.”*

*“Die leerders het uiteenlopende behoeftes, dus is die groepe waarmee ek werk dikwels nog te groot.”*

The language barrier discussed in Category 2.1.1 was also mentioned here as a challenge within the group context:

*“Ek het Afrikaanse en Engelse leerders in my klas wat op verskillende vlakke werk.”*

*“Die grootste uitdaging in my klas is om Engels en Afrikaans gelyktydig in ‘n leerondersteuningsklas aan te bied met leerders wat op verskillende vlakke werk.”*

#### **Sub-theme 2.4: Learning support is provided differently in terms of grades**

The descriptions below focus on learning support provided to learners in specific grades, and illustrates that different methods are used in different grades.

*“Ek werk net met leerders vanaf graad 1 tot 4.”*

*“In die drie graad 1 klasse moet ons kollaboratiewe werk, met ander woorde met die hele klas en daarna kan ons ‘n groep wat baie sukses onttrek.”*

*“Vanaf graad 2 onttrek ek 10 leerders in elke klasgroep, met ander woorde 30 graad 2’s, 30 graad 3’s en ongeveer 30 graad 4’s.”*

*“Daar is twee leerondersteuningsopvoeders by ons skool. Ek is die opvoeder in die eenheidsklas en die ander opvoeder is die leerondersteuningsopvoeder vir die hoofstroom. Sy neem net leerders vanaf graad 1 tot 3, Afrikaans en Engels.”*

*“By my tweede skool bied ek ondersteuning aan graad 1 en 2 groepe en ek bied ook op ‘n Dinsdag en Donderdag na tweede pouse ondersteuning aan alle IOOP-leerders [individual development and support learners (IDSL)].”*

In the above statements it is clear that some learning support also occurs in the classroom. Other references to this are as follows:

*“By my eerste skool bied ek ondersteuning aan Grade 1 en 4 in groepe en Graad 6 is dit klassikaal.”*

*“By my derde skool bied ek ondersteuning aan Grade 1 en 2 en onttrek in groepe en verder bied ek ook ondersteuning aan graad 3 in die klas.”*

*“By die Graad 1 klasse gee ek kollaboratiewe onderrig vir die hele klas en daarna onttrek ek leerders uit die graad 1 klasse wat agterstande het en dan werk ek met hulle individueel in groepe van 10.”*

The participants also referred to classes that are specifically focused on learners with learning disabilities:

*“As leerondersteuningsopvoeder werk ek by my skool met graad 1 en 2 leerders wat gestroom is. Die graad 1 en 2 klasse by my skool is gestroom sodat die leerders wat intensiewe intervensie benodig almal in een klas is. Daar word dan met die leerders op hulle eie vlakke gewerk.”*

*“In die eenheidsklas word die leerders voorberei vir ‘n vaardigheidskool waarna hulle gaan sodra hulle 15 jaar oud word.”*

As also illustrated in statements in the previous sub-themes, the participants reported that they work at more than one school. This aspect will be elaborated on in the following sub-theme.

### **Sub-theme 2.5: Learning support professionals work at more than one school**

Learning support professionals at rural schools are, according to the descriptions by the participants, working at different schools.

*“Ek werk by twee skole. Die een is ‘n skool met ongeveer 800 leerders. Die ander skool is ‘n landelike skool met ongeveer 150 leerders.”*

*“Ek werk by elke skool met ongeveer 60 leerders. In totaal werk ek dus by altwee skole met ongeveer 120 leerders en dan gee ek ook nog kollaboratiewe onderrig in graad 1 by altwee skole. By een skool is daar drie graad 1 klasse en by die tweede skool is daar twee graad 1 klasse.”*

*“Ek is Maandae en Woensdae X Primêr [Name of school]. Ek onttrek leerders vanaf graad 2 tot 3. Hulle is ongeveer 10 per groep en in total is daar 44. Daar is twee graad 1 klasse waar ek in die klas saam met die onderwyseres werk. Daar is ongeveer 35 leerders in elke graad 1 klas. Dinsdae en Donderdae is ek by Y Primêr [Name of school]. Daar onttrek ek leerders vanaf graad 2 tot 6. Hulle is ook ongeveer 10 per groep en is 41 leerders in totaal. Ek werk daar ook saam met die graad 1 klasopvoeder. Die graad 1 leerders is 36 in die klas. Ek is een Vrydag by die een skool en die ander Vrydag by die tweede skool.”*

*“Ek werk by twee skole. Altwee skole is landelike skole. By die een skool werk ek met 80 leerders en by die ander skool werk ek met 40 leerders.”*

Mahlo (2011:131) identified transport as a serious impediment in terms of accessibility for learning support professionals that work in more than one school in the Gauteng province. Accessibility of learning support is accentuated by the Department of Education (2005b:8) as follows: “...*The ultimate goal for educators, schools and other education institutions, and for those who support them, is the development of learners... Therefore, the Department of Education’s function is to provide the necessary infrastructural and human resource support for success. The district-based support team is a primary channel through which this should be provided*”. In addition, the Department of Education (2008:18) acknowledges the specific challenges in rural schools, and advises that accessibility of learning support professionals should receive priority attention to address these challenges.

### **Sub-theme 2.6: A description of feedback procedures**

Linked to the topic of collaboration (cf. Friend and Cook, 2007) and the previous discussion of the importance of DBSTs (cf. Frank, 2003:1; Department of Education, 2005b:5) this theme describes how feedback is provided. The statements below describe the interaction between the teacher, parents and the learning support professional.

*“Ek hou daaglikse rekords van elke leerder se ontwikkeling en gee kwartaaliks terugvoering aan die opvoeders en ouers.”*

*“Na aanleiding van die sistemiese toetse maak ek ‘n analise en na aanleiding van die analise bepaal ek en die klasonderwysers waarop ek gaan konsentreer.”*

It was noted that the parents were not involved in the assessment process (see Sub-theme 2.1). However, the inclusion of parents in feedback was described in this sub-theme. This is in line with the Department of Education’s (2008:22) guidelines.

### **Sub-theme 2.7: Support services available to learning support professionals**

Support services, within inclusive education, are an essential part of the school system. The operational guidelines of the Department of Education (2008:14) refers to the need to “...*ensure that there is a fair distribution of the range of additional support resources, programmes, staff and facilities, to ensure that there is access to such support for all learners that have been identified as requiring such resources*”.

The statements by the participants, however, point towards a lack of access to support.

*“Tans is ‘n dokter en ‘n sielkundige beskikbaar, maar hulle moet so ‘n groot aantal skole dien dat hulle nie gereeld na jou skool kan kom soos wat hulle benodig word nie.”*

*“Maatskaplike werkers en sielkundiges het baie skole wat hulle bedien, so hulle is nie altyd beskikbaar nie.”*

*“Leerders wat baie ernstige agterstande het en wat binne die eerste ses maande van onttrekking geen vordering toon nie word na die skoolsielkundige verwys vir verdere evaluering en verwysing en dan op grond van die skoolsielkundige se aanbevelings werk ek verder met hierdie leerders en ek en die sielkundige bespreek die leerders se agterstande.”*

This situation is acknowledged by the Department of Education (2008:18). The Department refers to the general scarcity of specialist professionals in the country, and highlights that this is specifically relevant to the rural schools. The said department identifies therapists, social workers and psychologists that are needed to provide holistic support. The lack of access to such support in rural schools needs to be considered. Therefore different employment models are proposed to be used to ensure access to specialist support staff, e.g. full-time or part-time employment of learning support professionals.

### **Theme 3: Participants’ perceptions of the value of learning support**

The value of learning support is described in terms of the value to learners and the value to teachers.

#### **Sub-theme 3.1: Specialised support outside of the classroom environment**

The descriptions below illustrate the value of individualised support, as well as extra time to achieve potential and specific methods that encourage development and growth:

*“Dit is goed dat kinders onttrek word en gespesialiseerde hulp kry.”*

*“Dit bied genoeg tyd om deeglike ondersteuning te bied en vaslegging deur middel van spel en ‘n takie in hulle boeke te doen.”*

*“Die klasse wat gestroom is, gee vir my ‘n goeie platform vanwaar ek deur meer visuele stimuli die leerder kan ondersteun. Hulle kan beleef, speel, leer en ontdek en dit kan hierdie leerders tot hoë hoogtes lei en selfs maak dat die leerders beter vaar as die leerders in die hoofstroomklasse.”*

*“Leerondersteuning bied ‘n geleentheid vir die leerders wat agter raak of ‘n leemte het op ‘n spesifieke area, om die probleem vroegtydig aan te spreek en te ondersteun in kleiner groepies waar meer individuele aandag gegee word.”*

*“Dit help die kinders baie om in ‘n klein groep by ‘n leerondersteuningsopvoeder te wees wat omgee en help tot hulle verstaan.”*

The latter statement places the emphasis on the value of care and acceptance. This aspect will be addressed in the category below:

**Category 3.1.1: Learners with needs for learning support are provided with individual support in a relaxed environment that contributes to positive self-esteem**

The value of learning support for learners is that the learners can work in smaller groups where individual attention is received. The participants explained this aspect as follows:

*“Die feit dat die leerders wel in kleiner groepe saam met die opvoeder kan werk, werk baie goed.”*

*“As jy ‘n groep van 10 leerders onttrek kan jy lekker individuele aandag gee.”*

*“In die kleiner groep voel die kinders meer op hulle gemak en ervaar die liefde en omgee en deel hul huislike omstandighede en probleme met die leerondersteuningsopvoeder.”*

The small groups also provide the learners with a relaxed environment, as described as follows:

*“Ek glo die hulp moet genotvol aangebied word – my kinders wat ek in die eenheid gehad het sowel as die wat ek nou onttrek vir leerondersteuning weet hulle kan ‘speel’ by my en so vind leer plaas sonder dat hulle werklik besef hulle is besig om te leer.”*



*“Die belangrikste aspek van leerondersteuning is dat dit genotvol moet wees, spanningloos en dat leerders moet uitsien om te kom vir leerondersteuning.”*

*“Hierdie leerders wil nie waag nie en hulle kan nie lees nie. Later begin hulle meer gemaklik voel in my klas, want ek werk aanvanklik met elkeen op sy eie vlak – sodat hy sukses kan beleef en dan bereid is om verder te waag. Dan neem ek hom stadig volgens sy pas op sy vlak ‘n bietjie verder.”*

*“Die leerder moet sukses in homself kan beleef. Wanneer ‘n leerder in my klas kom het hy so ‘n lae selfbeeld as gevolg van mislukking wat hy in sy skoolloopbaan tot op daardie stadium ervaar het.”*

This relaxed environment, and the individual support, provides learners with a platform to develop positive self-esteem within a caring environment in which they feel safe.

*“Vir my is dit die belangrikste om eerste sy selfbeeld op te bou – hy moet eers in homself glo dat hy kan en dan kan ek eers begin om met hom te werk.”*

*“Ek as leerondersteuningsopvoeder doen baie maal nie enige werk nie, maar bou net aan hierdie leerders se selfbeeld en gee hulle die hoop op ‘n toekoms.”*

*“Baie van die leerders wat ek onttrek vind regtig baat by die ondersteuning wat hulle kry. Hulle selfvertroue verbeter, hulle waag meer en hulle kan met nuwe moed teruggaan na die klas.”*

The focus on self-esteem as part of learning support is based on the viewpoint by many educators that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement (Vialle, Heaven, and Chiarochi, 2005:39). Self-esteem refers to the concept of self and is a cognitive and descriptive view of one self (e.g. I can... versus I cannot...). It also includes an evaluative component where the learner experience feelings related to his/her perception of him/herself (Ayduk, Gyurak and Luerssen, 2009:1468). Past successes or failures therefore impacts on how the learner will approach present challenges. To focus on successes therefore encourages efforts to achieve further success (Wilson, Buehler, Lawford, Schmidt and Yong, 2012:343).

### **Sub-theme 3.2: Support to teachers**

The participants also noted that by providing support to the learners, the teachers also receive support.

*“Dit ondersteun ook opvoeders.”*

*“Dit is ekstra hulp.”*

*“Ander onderwysers hou weer van die leerondersteuning, want dit is ‘n hulp vir hulle.”*

The Department of Education (2005b:8) refers to the ultimate goal of inclusive education as the development of learners. It is acknowledged that, for this to happen, effective teaching is needed. Effective teaching is again dependent on the development of effective curricular and supportive teaching and learning environments. This is in line with the Education White Paper 6’s (2001:17) description that “...*mainstreaming is about giving some learners extra support so that they can ‘fit in’ or be integrated into the ‘normal’ classroom routine*”. The learning support professional therefore provides support to the teacher to realise inclusive education in the classroom.

#### **Category 3.2.1: Planning and coordination with the curriculum is of value to the learning support professional**

The comments from the participants point to alignment of their work with the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to ensure that their work with the learners forms a link with the work in the classroom. In this way, they are supporting teachers with their work (cf. Mahlo, 2011:16).

*“Die feit dat ek my jaar-, kwartaal- en daaglikse beplanning volgens die CAPS-dokument [CAPS] ook doen help my om effektief te werk.”*

*“Ek haak aan by die klaskamer en daarom maak my tekste vir die kind sin in die breë konteks.”*

*“Vir Wiskunde werk ek saam met die CAPS-dokument [CAPS], maar net op ‘n kleiner getalgebied.”*

#### **Theme 4: Aspects that perceived as limitations regarding the provision of learning support**

The participants' descriptions of the limitations or challenges experienced when providing learning support is linked to the descriptions of learning support in the previous themes. They described limitations in terms of the fact that they deliver support services at more than one school, a lack of infrastructure and resources, a lack of cooperation between learning support professionals and teachers, unavailability or a lack of collaboration by the advisor and a lack of alternative options for learners with special needs. These aspects will be described in the following five sub-themes.

##### **Sub-theme 4.1: Working with large groups limits the quality of attention to individual learners**

The participants did not view group work as a limitation, but they reported that the group sizes were not conducive to the learning support process (cf. Baines et al., 2005:1, Kutnick and Blatchford, 2013:28).

*“Om tien leerders per groep te akkomodeer is te veel. Jy kom nie by almal uit nie.”*

*“Hulle [Department of Education] beweer ons betrek meer kinders deur dit [working with the whole class] te doen, maar dit is baie moeilik om in 'n vreemde klas in te stap en dit te doen.”*

##### **Sub-theme 4.2: Learning support professionals find it difficult to deliver services at more than one school**

This sub-theme relates to the discussion and literature control (cf. Department of Education, 2008; Mahlo, 2011) in Sub-theme 2.5. In terms of working in more than one school as a limitation, the following statements were made:

*“Dit is ook baie moeilik om jou aandag tussen twee skole te verdeel.”*

*“Jy leer ken ook nie die leerders genoegsaam as jy so rondbeweeg nie.”*

*“Die probleme by een skool is alreeds so groot dat dit moeilik is om jou in twee te sny vir twee skole.”*

*“Die feit dat ek by twee skole is – dit is moeilik om genoeg tyd vir al die leerders te maak.”*

*“Die feit dat ek by twee skole werk dat daar tye kom wat ek nie op hoogte is van wat by die skole aangaan nie. Die vergaderings en besluite vind dikwels plaas en word geneem as ek by my ander skool is.”*

*“Die feit dat ek by twee skole werk is ook ‘n groot struikelblok vir my. Dit werk nie vir my nie. Ek kry dikwels nie klaar met my werk nie en dan sien ek die leerders eers weer oor ‘n week. Ek kan nie lekker vaslegging doen nie, want oor ‘n week het hulle alles vergeet.”*

### **Sub-theme 4.3: A lack of infrastructure and resources are reported**

Participants in a study by Mahlo (2011:131) reported that they lack financial support to fulfil their duties. The participants reported that they have to cover own transport between schools and to buy equipment for their work. The participants in this present study referred to a lack of classrooms, as well as the conditions of classroom, as limitations as follows:

*“By een skool werk ek in ‘n kerksaaltjie en moet eers ‘n klas skep voor ek begin werk.”*

*“Skole druk die leerondersteuningsopvoeder in enige beskikbare hoekie in – ek het gelukkig ‘n gewone klaskamer met genoeg ruimte, maar die deur het nie ‘n knip aan nie, die vloer sak en dit veroorsaak dat planke op ‘n hoop gedruk word op die vloer.”*

*“Die ligte maak ‘n geraas as hulle aan is, die dakwaaiers is stukkend.”*

*“By die een skool is my klaskamer in die kombuis van die personeelkamer.”*

*“By die skool waar my klaskamer in die kombuis is, is daar nie genoeg stoele vir die leerders nie. Ek werk met 10 leerders op ‘n slag en van die leerders moet staan terwyl ek onderrig. Na pouse is die leerders gewoonlik te moeg om te staan, wat heeltemal verstaanbaar is en dit veroorsaak dat die leerders nie behoorlik kan konsentreer nie. Die leerders moet vir ‘n uur lank staan en dit is ‘n groot probleem.”*

A lack of equipment available for learning support was also reported as a limitation. The following statements attest to this aspect.

*“Wat skryfbehoeftes, soos potlode, uitveërs, plastiek, ensovoorts betref moet die leerder ondersteuner maar uit sy sak aankope doen, want jy is mos nie op die skole se diensstate nie en voel maar altyd soos ‘n buitestaander.”*

*“Struikelblokke sal daar seker altyd wees in die vorm van toeganklikheid tot hoofstroomhandboeke – die skool het altyd net genoeg vir die kinders.”*

*“Ons word ook nie tegnologies toegerus nie. Die Departement van Onderwys se nuutste programme wat byvoorbeeld nie deur my rekenaar se e-pos ooggemaak kan word nie.”*

*“Daar word ook nie voorsiening gemaak vir die aankope van byvoorbeeld potlode, karton, ensovoorts vir die leerondersteuningsklas nie.”*

*“Die skool voorsien nie sekere skryfbehoeftes nie. By die een skool het ek ‘n tekort aan skryfboeke.”*

Despite the Department of Education’s (2005b:9) guidelines regarding the provision of teaching and learning materials and equipment to facilitate learning for all learners, it appears that this situation still needs attention in the rural schools where this present study was conducted.

As also discussed in Category 2.1.1 above (cf. National Illiteracy Action Project, 2007:1; Cree et al., 2012:6), the participating learning support professionals also reflected on the role of parents as a support system. They viewed this aspect as a limitation, as illustrated in the statements below:

*“Verder is ouerbetrokkenheid en ons leerders se omstandighede ‘n groot struikelblok.”*

*“Die ouers se werkloosheid speel ook ‘n groot rol en die feit dat leerders in ongunstige omstandighede bly, is ook ‘n groot uitdaging.”*

#### **Sub-theme 4.4: Collaboration between the learning support professional and the teacher is lacking**

The previous themes described the participants’ descriptions of the value of collaboration between the teacher and the learning support professional. This was also confirmed in literature (cf. Department of Education, 2008:14; Department of Education, 2005b:8; Education White Paper 6, 2001:17). In addition, Dreyer (2008:63) refers to various research that confirms the potential and value of teamwork and collaboration to create successful learning experiences, regardless of barriers to learning. In this sub-theme, the participants explain how a lack of collaboration is a limitation in practice.

*“Dit voel vir my daar is te min kommunikasie tussen my en die opvoeders, van hulle sien die uur wat die leerders onttrek word as ‘n blaaskans in die klas.”*

*“Ek ervaar dat die leerondersteuningsopvoeders sukkel met opvoeders wat nie wil saamwerk nie en leerondersteuningsopvoeders sukkel ook om roosters te laat klop.”*

*“Verder is daar nie altyd goeie samewerking van die opvoeders nie en voorstelle wat ek maak word dikwels nie geïmplementeer nie.”*

*“Asseseringstake en toetse is ook ‘n probleem, want dan wil die opvoeders nie die leerders stuur vir leerondersteuning nie.”*

*“Opvoeders dink dit is ‘n ‘afperiode’ as die leerondersteuningsopvoeders inbeweeg in die klasse en klassikaal kollaboratiewe onderrig gee. Die opvoeders wil dan die klas verlaat.”*

*“Jy as leerondersteuningsopvoeder betrek die klasonderwysers, jy deel met hulle en jy wil graag hê hulle moet ook probeer om van die tegnieke wat jy gebruik deel te maak van hulle daaglikse klasse, maar hulle is so gejaagd om deur die leerplan te werk en iewers langs die pad verloor hulle die kinders.”*

*“Ek is nie die voorsitter van die OOS-span/SGOS-span [TSTs/SBSTs] nie, ‘n klasonderwyser is die voorsitter, maar dit staan in der waarheid net op papier. As ek nie ‘n OOS-vergadering aanvra nie, sal dit nooit gebeur nie en verder het die onderwysers gewoonlik ook nie tyd om ‘n OOS-vergadering te hou nie.”*

These descriptions are contrary to Gershel’s (2005:70) report that “schools are increasingly developing innovative support structures and collaborative teams to realise inclusion through policies and practices to empower adults and learners alike”. In support of this author’s viewpoint, the Department of Education (2008:18) advises that the teacher/school based support team must be coordinated by a teacher, and the Human Resources formula must take into account time taken away from classroom teaching.

The participants expanded on the lack of collaboration and explained that they experience a lack of co-operation from school principals:

*“Skoolhoofde is nie goed ingelig oor die werk van die leerondersteuningsopvoeders nie.”*

*“As jy ‘n skoolhoof het wat nie verstaan waarmee jy as leerondersteuningsopvoeder besig is nie en wat nie weet wat jou werk behels nie en wat jou net sien as nog ‘n opvoeder, maak dit jou werk as leerondersteuningsopvoeder baie moeilik.”*

*“Die feit dat daar baie keer van die normale dagprogram afgewyk word, maak inbraak op ons tyd. Byvoorbeeld leerders oefen atletiek, koor, mense besoek die skool met verskillende projekte, ensovoorts.”*

*“Ek kry nie werklik samewerking van die skoolhoofde nie. Dit voel asof die hoofde redeneer die leerondersteuningsopvoeders kom van die distrikskantoor af en die distrikskantoor moet die leerondersteuningsopvoeder se probleme hanteer en oplos.”*

Mahlo (2011:161) identifies training of principles to understand the role of the learning support professional and how to support them to benefit the aim of inclusive education as a need. In support of this viewpoint and the descriptions above, Dreyer (2008:236) recommends that “school principals, as managers, should be trained to understand the principles of Education White Paper 6... and should be empowered to manage school reform that will ultimately culminate in an inclusive school”.

#### **Sub-theme 4.5: Unavailability of or lack of coordination by the learning support advisor**

The participants reported the unavailability of an advisor of the district-based support team as a limitation.

*“Afwesigheid van ‘n leerondersteuningsadviseur in ons kring is ‘n probleem.”*

*“Ons moet onself lei.”*

They also reported that a lack of guidance and knowledge by the advisor is experienced as a limitation.

*“Die kundigheid van ons leerondersteuningsadviseur is ‘n groot struikelblok. Sy is nie kundig genoeg om ons te bemagtig met metodes, tegnieke, strategieë en en demonstrasies nie.”*

*“Die distrikskantoor verwag van die leerondersteuningsopvoeders om hierdie veranderinge aan te bring en die nuwe goed te implementeer, maar die*

*leerondersteuningsadviseur kan nooit vir die leerondersteuningsopvoeders kom demonstreer hoe hierdie goed geïmplementeer moet word nie.”*

Accessibility of the advisor was also reported as a limitation:

*“Daar is soveel kanale waardeur ek eers moet werk voordat ek by my adviseur kan uitkom.”*

*“Daar is te veel skole wat adviseurs moet bedien en hulle kom te min by ons uit.”*

The participants also referred to a lack of coordination between the different advisors:

*“Ek vind dat leerondersteuningsadviseurs nie saamwerk nie.”*

*“Die kringe verskil baie en dit behoort nie so te wees nie. Elke kring werk op sy eie eiland.”*

*“Die leerondersteuningsadviseur sal byvoorbeeld sê dat as jy na ‘n tyd sien ‘n leerder vorder nie, moet jy die leerder uitskakel. Die skoolsielkundige voel weer die leerder moet nog alle moontlike ondersteuning kry.”*

In addition, unrealistic expectations and a lack of consistency by the district advisors were reported as limitations.

*“Leerondersteuningsopvoeders word oorlaai deur die distrikskantoor met administratiewe werk en die daaglikse werk wat jy in jou klas moet doen.”*

*“Verder maak die distrikskantoor voortdurend veranderings en daar word gereeld nuwe en ander goed bygevoeg. Jy het byvoorbeeld verlede week iets op so ‘n manier gedoen en die volgende week kom die distrikskantoor en sê jy moet dit nou weer op ‘n ander manier doen.”*

*“Daar is geen vasgestelde riglyne waarvolgens ons moet werk nie. Die een oomblik moet ons ‘n ding op hierdie manier doen en die volgende oomblik moet ons dit op ‘n ander manier doen. Niemand demonstreer hoe ons dit moet doen nie en sodra ons dit wel doen moet ons weer oorslaan na iets anders.”*

*“Die distrikskantoor kry opdragte vanaf die hoofkantoor, hulle weet self nie hoe om dit te doen nie, hulle druk dit op ons af en verwag dat ons dit by die*



*skole moet implementeer al kan hulle nie vir ons wys hoe ons dit moet doen nie.”*

*“Nog ‘n struikelblok is dat elke kwartaal dikwels ‘n ander fokus vir leerondersteuning het. Jy het dit net begin implementeer en dan moet jy weer verander en dit ook aan die onderwysers verduidelik.”*

Mahlo (2011:124-125) concluded that that advisors are instrumental to ensure that learning support professionals receive the necessary training, support and infrastructure to fulfil their duties effectively.

#### **Sub-theme 4.6: A lack of alternative assessments and options to develop alternative skills among learners with learning needs**

A final concern of the participants was that there is not a variety of assessments and options available to learners with special needs (cf. Department of Education, 2008:7).

*“Baie van hierdie Minimum Brein Disfunksie leerders bereik ‘n plafon waar hulle net nie verder kan ontwikkel nie. Hierdie leerders is nie total hopeloos nie. Hulle is net op sekere kognitiewe aspekte swak, maar deur hulle prakties te laat ontwikkel kan daartoe bydra dat hierdie leerders heel moontlik eendag uitstekend kan vaar in die vaardigheidswêreld. Daar word egter geen stimulasie aan hierdie leerders gegee in die Kurrikulum- en Assesseringsbeleid Verklaring (KABV/CAPS) nie.”*

*“Daar moet moeite gedoen word met die leerders wat geregtig is op alternatiewe assessering. Die leerders moet in die geheel ondersteun word.”*

*“Die hoeveelheid assesseringstake wat die leerders in die hoofstroomklas moet voltooi, moet verminder word, sodat meer aandag aan onderrig en vaslegging gegee kan word.”*

Related to the challenges described in this theme, the participating learning support professionals described what is needed for effective learning support to take place.

## **Theme 5: Learning support professionals' descriptions of what is needed for effective learning support to take**

The participants firstly recommended that learning support professionals should work at one school only, and that this support should be provided in small groups to ensure individual attention. They reported that learning support professionals should be involved in the overall progress of the learner. A further recommendation was that specific criteria for learning support is needed and should be communicated to the schools and that cooperation and communication between all role-players should be ensured. In line with this, support from the learning support advisors and collaboration with curriculum advisors are needed, including in-service training opportunities. The participants accentuated that support services and resources should be available to them and that they should receive specific recognition to enable them to make recommendations. In conclusion, they advised that specialised subjects to enable holistic progress should be included in learning support programmes.

### **Sub-theme 5.1: Learning support professionals should work at one school only**

*“Leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet slegs een skool bedien – ek het in ‘n vorige pos twee skole bedien en is tans net by een skool – ek kan die verskil sien.”*

*“Daar moet eerstens by groter skole voltyds ‘n leerondersteuningsopvoeder wees en nie net drie dae soos dit tans werk nie.”*

This sub-theme relates to Sub-themes 2.5 and 4.2 above. The statement highlights the value of working at one school in terms of ensuring continuity and follow-up services. The aim is to ascertain positive results for learners.

*“Alle leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet net by een skool werk om sodoende meer betrokke te wees by die leerders se profiele, die verwysing na die sielkundige, asook die terugvoering van die sielkundige. Sodoende kan die leerondersteuningsopvoeder weer alles opvolg, want van die goed val deur die mat, omdat kinders aanbeveel word vir Individuele Ontwikkelingsplanne en vaardigheidskole en die klasopvoeders nie die goed opvolg nie, veral as die kinders na ‘n volgende graad gaan.”*

The Education White Paper 6 (2001:39) acknowledges that expanding access and provision to learners who experience learning barriers implies a need for considerable resources, particularly staffing. This policy, however, suggested that learning support should be provided from a district office to schools as needed. The findings in this current study, however, suggest that the needs of learners at specific schools, and the type of support needed to ensure effective support require on-going engagement and follow-ups. This viewpoint is also described in terms of a need to apply on different grade levels, a stable programme that do not change too often, and adequate time needed to ensure progress.

*“Ek glo daar moet ‘n leerondersteuningsopvoeder in elke skool in die grondslagfase en die intermediêre wees om werklik ‘n impak te kan maak.”*

*“Hou die fokusse vir langer dieselfde sodat vordering duidelik sigbaar is. Die fokusse moet ook intensiewer wees.”*

*“Die fokusse vir leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet nie elke jaar verander word nie.”*

In terms of the bio-ecological model to educational change and development, scaffolding can be used as support given during the learning process. This support is tailored to the needs of the learner with the intention of helping the learner achieve his/her learning goals (Sawyer, 2006). For effective scaffolding, resources are needed and it requires consistent and on-going modelling and coaching. Sweller, Kirschner and Clark (2007:117) advise that effective support requires regular and consistent input. Support should provide learners with multiple types of guidance that interact and reinforce each other.

#### **Category 5.1.1: Learning support should be provided in small groups to ensure individual attention**

In line with the suggestion above related to on-going and consistent support to learners by means of continued involvement of the learning support professional, the participants further suggested that the support should be provided in smaller groups to ensure individualised support (cf. Baines et al., 2005:1; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:793-828; Sub-theme 4.1).

*“Die groepe moet kleiner wees, sodat leerders meer individuele aandag kan kry.”*

### **Sub-theme 5.2: Learning support professionals should be involved in the overall progress of the learner**

The description of key functions to ensure support of learners who experience barriers by the Department of Education (2005b:32) links with the discussion of the need to focus on one school in the previous sub-theme. This focus could lead to collective work, effective coordination, and monitoring and evaluation. The need to consider this aspect is described through the following statements.

*“Die leerondersteuningsopvoeder moet ook betrek word by progressie en promosie van die leerders, want met meeste van die leerders het die leerondersteuningsopvoeder tog gewerk.”*

*“Ook beter skakeling met die skoolsielkundige.”*

*“Ons betrokkeheid by die hele progressie en promosie wat OOS-span/SGOS-span [TSTs/SBSTs] vergaderings en ondersteuning byvoorbeeld ten opsigte van leerderprofiel insluit, is baie sinvol.”*

### **Sub-theme 5.3: Specific criteria for learning support are needed and should be communicated to the schools**

The participants statements below point to a need to develop a clear description of the role, functions and responsibilities of the learning support professional (cf. Department of Education, 2005b:22), which should be clearly understood by the institutions (i.e. school principals and teachers):

*“Skole moet beter ingelig word oor die werk van die leerondersteuningsopvoeder.”*

*“Daar moet aparte kriteria wees vir leerondersteuning met betrekking tot IQMS [The Integrated Quality Management System].”*

*“Die departement moet duidelike riglyne hê vir leerondersteuningsopvoeders.”*

The statements above refer to the need for criteria that could be linked to the Quality Management System (QMS) that is used for teachers. The purpose is to ensure that educators (in this case learning support professionals) are performing in line with their job descriptions in order to improve levels of accountability in schools. Such criteria are based on:

- Measuring the performance of educators in line with their respective roles and responsibilities;

- Providing a basis for decisions on rewards, incentives and other salary related benefits for the current year;
- Providing a basis for decisions on mechanisms to recognise good performance and address under-performance;
- Consideration of the relevant contextual factors in conducting assessments (Department of Basic Education, 2013b:4-5).

The participants referred to a specific programme that they found to be valuable, and that could underpin the criteria for learning support to be communicated to the schools.

*“Die Annatjie Hanekom leesonderrigkursus (AHA) se model moet as leerondersteuningsopvoeders se werkswyse geïmplementeer word.”*

*“Die bietjie wat ek van die Annatjie Hanekom leesonderrigmodel (AHA) begin implementeer het, het my meer positief gemaak. Dit gee vir my ‘n raamwerk waarvolgens ek kan werk en dit laat my veilig voel, want dit is ‘n model wat deur die Wes-Kaapse Onderwysdepartement (WKOD) goedgekeur is. Ek kan ook sien dat dit die kinders help.”*

*“Ek het hierdie afgelope paar maande by die Annatjie Hanekom leesonderrigkursus (AHA) meer geleer as wat ek oot by my leerondersteuningsadviseur geleer het en en dit is nie veronderstel om so te werk nie.”*

The programme referred to by the participants refers to a literacy intervention programme that assists with learning barriers (Hanekom, 2010).

### **Category 5.3.1: Cooperation and communication between all role-players should be ensured**

This category also relates to Sub-theme 4.4 (cf. Department of Education, 2008:14; Department of Education, 2005b:8; Education White Paper 6, 2001:17). The suggested criteria for learning support professionals and the emphasis that these criteria should be communicated to schools to ensure the effective implementation of learning support are further supported by statements that highlight a need for cooperation and communication between all role-players

*“Daar moet goeie kommunikasie tussen die ouers, opvoeders, skoolhoof en leerondersteuningsopvoeder wees.”*

*“Die leerondersteuningsopvoeder moet die skoolhoof aan haar kant kry – dit is baie belangrik.”*

The first statement above serves as further support of the bio-ecological model to educational changed and development, referring to mezzo and macro levels that need to be included in communication processes in learning support (Cf. Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

#### **Sub-theme 5.4: Support from the learning support advisors and collaboration with curriculum advisors are needed**

The request for support from the learning support advisors and collaboration with curriculum advisors has also been highlighted in Sub-theme 4.5 and linked with policy (cf. Education White Paper 6, 2001:19). The following statements serve as further support:

*“Ek kry gereelde besoeke van my leerondersteuningsadviseur, maar ek kry min leiding van haar en ek sou graag wou hê dat sy vir my demonstrasielesse moet gee.”*

*“Leerondersteuningsadviseurs en kurrikulumadviseurs moet nader aan mekaar werk.”*

*“Leerondersteuningsadviseurs; veral in dieselfde streek, moet uit dieselfde mond praat.”*

*“In ons kring sou ek beter samewerking tussen die distrikskantoor en leerondersteuning in die veld wou hê.”*

*“Verder is dit ook baie belangrik dat leerondersteuningsadviseurs wat aangestel word, self eers leerondersteuning gegee het, want dit is baie keer nie die geval nie. As jy ‘n leerondersteuningsadviseur is wat uit ‘n gewone hoofstroomklas kom en nooit self ‘n leerondersteuningsklas gehad het nie, gaan jy geen begrip hê vir leerondersteuningsopvoeders nie.”*

*“Verder het die leerondersteuningsopvoeders gedurig ondersteuning van die distrikskantoor nodig, want jy is op geen skool se salarisstaat nie.”*

The statements indicate that the guidelines provided by the Department of Education (2008:25) are not happening in practice.

#### **Category 5.4.1: In-service training opportunities for learning support professionals should be created**

Related to the need to develop learning support capacity through training, as mentioned above, the statements below illustrate the request for training opportunities to be provided by the learning support advisors. The participants specifically refer to the value of peer learning opportunities, and training in programmes that have been identified as effective (cf. Hanekom, 2010).

*“Dit werk goed as leerondersteuningsopvoeders saambeplan in ‘n groep en gedurig ander planne probeer maak en by mekaar leer.”*

*“Alle leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet verplig word om die Annatjie Hanekom leesonderrigkursus (AHA) te doen en leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet ook demonstrasielesse aanbied en personeelontwikkeling om hul kennis te deel met die ander opvoeders.”*

*“Daar kan eerstens meer kursusse aangebied word wat op die leerondersteuningsopvoeders se veldgebied toegespits is.”*

*“Daar moet ook meer opleidingsgeleentheid vir leerondersteuningsopvoeders geskep word.”*

#### **Sub-theme 5.5: Support services and resources should be available to learning support professionals**

This sub-theme is linked to Sub-theme 4.3 (cf. Department of Education, 2005a:47; Department of Education, 2005b:9; Mahlo, 2011:131). In this sub-theme the specific support services and resources needed for effective learning support to take place are described as follows:

*“Wanneer ‘n leerondersteuningsopvoeder ‘n aanbeveling maak dat ‘n leerder ‘n arbeidsterapeut, spraakterapeut, maatskaplike werker, ensovoorts moet sien, moet hierdie dienste beskikbaar wees.”*

*“Ek dink die idee dat leerondersteuning vanuit ‘n ,hulpbronsentrum‘ funksioneer is baie doelmatig en funksioneel.”*

*“Dikwels het hierdie leerders net ‘n bril nodig of hulle het ‘n spraakprobleem. Hierdie leerders moet dan verwys word na die Wes-Kaapse Onderwysdepartement (WKOD) se arbeidsterapeute en spraakterapeute.”*

### **Sub-theme 5.6: Learning support professionals should receive specific recognition to enable them to make recommendations**

The participants explained that the need to do individualised planning that requires specialised knowledge and skills.

*“Dit is ‘n baie breë terrein, so dit sal baie moeilik wees om alle leerondersteuningsopvoeders op dieselfde wyse te laat werk – elkeen se werk is uniek en ek hoop dit kan in die toekoms ook so gerespekteer word as professionele opvoeder.”*

*“Verder is dit hoogtyd dat leerondersteuningsopvoeders geplaas word op posvlak 2. Daar is al jare sprake daarvan, maar dit gebeur nooit nie. Ons is spesialiste in ons veld en daarom moet ons op posvlak 2 geplaas word.”*

Based on this, the participants requested recognition. This recognition should lead to a mandate to make recommendations that will be considered seriously. In addition, they requested respect for what they are supposed to do.

*“Leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet op ‘n posvlak twee geplaas word sodat hulle bietjie groter voet het om op te staan.”*

*“Leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet nie toesig hou in afwesige opvoeders se plek nie. Indien hulle toesig hou, sal hulle vir ewig toesig hou en nie hulle werk gedoen kry nie.”*

*“Leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet bevorder word na posvlak 2, want dan sal hulle ernstig opgeneem word en ondersteun word.”*

*“Leerondersteuningsopvoeders moet meer ernstig opgeneem word. Hulle moet toegelaat word om hulle werk te doen en nie as ‘n bykomstigheid vir die skool gesien word nie, maar as deel van die skool.”*

This viewpoint was supported by Dreyer’s (2008:235) recommendation that *“learning support teachers should be promoted to post level two, which will acknowledge the essential role they play in schools and provide them with the authority to manage the implementation of learning support in mainstream classes”*.



### **Sub-theme 5.7: Specialised subjects to enable the holistic progress should be included in learning support programmes**

In support of the holistic nature of the bio-ecological model to educational change and development, the participants recommended that a variety of learning activities could contribute to a holistic development of the learners (cf. Sweller et al. 2007:117).

*“Liggaamlike opvoeding, sang, handwerk is weggeneem uit die skole. Hierdie vakke is baie belangrik vir die totale ontwikkeling van hierdie leerders.”*

*“Daar moet intensief met hierdie leerders gewerk word.”*

*“Die leerders moet sukses beleef, selfvertroue aanleer en aangemoedig word om te leer, meer te weet en om beslis hulle vaardighede te ontwikkel.”*

The findings discussed above were further described and supported by the findings related to teachers’ perceptions and experiences of learning support in rural schools.

### **4.4 Findings: Teachers’ perceptions and experiences related to the nature of learning support in rural schools**

Four main themes provide the story line for the data obtained from the participating teachers, namely: 1) Participants’ description of inclusive education; 2) their descriptions of learning support; 3) perceptions of obstacles related to effective learning support and 5) recommendations related to effective learning support. The themes, sub-themes and categories are illustrated in the table below:

**Table 4.3:** Themes and, sub-themes categories

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
<b>Theme 6:</b> Teachers’ descriptions of inclusive education	<b>Sub-theme 6.1:</b> A description of how teachers approach inclusive education
	<b>Sub-theme 6.2:</b> A description of challenges experienced related to inclusive education
	<b>Sub-theme 6.3:</b> A description of the value of inclusive education
<b>Theme 7:</b> Teachers’ perceptions of learning support	<b>Sub-theme 7.1:</b> A description of the nature of learning support
	<b>Sub-theme 7.2:</b> A description of the focus of learning support
	<b>Sub-theme 7.3:</b> A description of the value of learning support
	<b>Sub-theme 7.4:</b> Teachers’ description of how learners are referred to learning support services
	<b>Sub-theme 7.5:</b> A description of communication and coordination between the learning support professional and the teacher
<b>Theme 8:</b> Teachers’ perceptions of	<b>Sub-theme 8.1:</b> A concern related to the long-term value for

obstacles related to effective learning support	learners
<b>Theme 9:</b> Teachers' recommendations related to effective learning support	<b>Sub-theme 9.1:</b> Support to learners within the classroom
	<b>Sub-theme 9.2:</b> Empowerment of teachers to implement learning support in inclusive education
	<b>Sub-theme 9.3:</b> Separate learning opportunities to have long-term impacts

### **Theme 6: Teachers' descriptions of inclusive education**

Inclusive education accommodate all learners in mainstream classrooms (cf. Tapasak and Walther-Thomas, 1999:216; Landsberg, 2005:62). The participants elaborated on the above description as follows:

*“Inklusiewe onderwys beteken onderwys vir almal ongeag taal, ras, geslag, gestremdheid, leerhindernis, ensovoorts.”*

*“Dit beteken om alle leerders met hulle verskillende, unieke behoeftes of gestremdheid te akkommodeer. Daar mag geensins teenoor enige leerder gediskrimineer word op grond van armoede, ras, gestremdheid - fisies gestremd, leergestremd of verstandelik gestremd - of op grond van kultuur/godsdienstelike oortuigings nie.”*

*“Die opvoeders moet die leerders se vlak van ontwikkeling en hul leertempo in ag neem. Die leerders moet nie gekategoriseer of geëtiketeer word volgens hul gestremdheid of leerhindernisse nie.”*

*“Dit maak voorsiening dat alle leerders hul volle potensiaal in ‘n leeromgewing kan bereik ongeag sy klas, ras, geloof, gestremdheid, taal en leefstyl.”*

*“Dit beteken dat leerders met verskillende opvoedkundige vermoëns in die hoofstroomklas teen hulle eie pas kan vorder.”*

*“Dit is onderwys waar alle leerders die geleentheid gegun word om aan alle aktiwiteite binne die hoofstroomklas deel te neem en die onderwysers bied ondersteuning aan alle leerders.”*

The discussion illustrates inclusive education as a means to combat social exclusion and discrimination. It is described as more than merely focusing on learners with special needs. Inclusive education also involves acknowledging diversity in the South African society (i.e. ethnicity, language, etc.). The participants also described how they approach inclusive education, as well as the value and obstacles related to this approach.

### **Sub-theme 6.1: A description of how teachers approach inclusive education**

The participants referred to differentiation as a manner in which they determine the needs of different learners according to which activities are being presented. This aspect was also discussed in Sub-theme 4.6 in terms of the perceptions of the learning support professional participants (cf. Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:793-828). The participating teachers reported on this aspect as follows:

*“Ek differensieer. Ek doen die graadvlak werk met al die leerders en dan skaal ek net die hoeveelheid werk af tot op die leerders se verskillende vlakke.”*

*“Die leerders se profiele word bestudeer en gesprekke word met die ouers gevoer. Die leerders word ingedeel volgens vlakke van prestasie, maar word ook blootgestel aan die normale werk en vereistes soos deur die kurrikulum op hul graadvlak. Differensiasie vind plaas, maar elke leerder word met die nodige respek behandel, ongeag sy ras, taal of ander kulturele voorkeure.”*

*“Differensiasie word gedoen om die leerders op verskillende vlakke te akkomodeer. Dit geskied in die vorm van verskillende metodes van vraagstelling en die hoeveelheid werk wat die leerders kry.”*

*“Die opvoeder doen grondlynassessering om die leerders se vlak van leer te bepaal, asook om te bepaal watter leeruitvalle/hindernisse leerders toon. Alle leerders word blootgestel aan hul graad se werk, waarna daar differensiasie in groepwerk gedoen word.”*

The latter statement refers to group work as a teaching method. The participating teachers used group work to implement inclusive education according to different needs of learners.

*“Ek laat die leerders in groepe, individueel, konkreet, semi-konkreet en abstrak werk.”*

*“Ek doen dieselfde werk met alle leerders, maar ek skaal die werk af in die groepe waarin hulle opgedeel is volgens hulle vlak.”*

*“Binne die groepe kry die leerders aktiwiteite en oefeninge van werk wat op die leerders se vlak is terwyl die opvoeder leiding en ondersteuning bied. Die leerders werk meer prakties as abstrak.”*

*“Groeponderrig vind plaas sodat die vinnige leerders genoegsame stimulasie ontvang en sodat die stadige leerders nie te ver agter raak nie. Die basislynessessering toon waar die uitvalle van die leerders is.”*

The participants also described skills needed by the teacher.

*“Die opvoeders moet dus bewus wees van leerstruikelblokke, dit kan herken en weet hoe om dit te benader.”*

*“Beplanning is belangrik.”*

*“As ek byvoorbeeld die musiekgedeelte van Kuns en Kultuur by die Tale integreer, byvoorbeeld gediggies sing, dan werk dit goed.”*

### **Sub-theme 6.2: A description of challenges experienced related to inclusive education**

The participating teachers explain systemic challenges to implement inclusive education.

*“Volgens die inklusiewe onderwysbeleid moet daar tydens assessering spesiale voorsiening gemaak word vir leerders met leerhindernisse (byvoorbeeld meer tyd om take te voltooi, lees die vrae aan die leerders, gee take wat ook voorsiening maak vir die leerders wat sukkel.) In die praktyk werk dit ongelukkig nie so nie. Volgens die CAPS–assesseringsbeleid moet alle leerders dieselfde take volgens die graadvereistes voltooi sonder enige hulp van die opvoeders.”*

*“Oorvol klasse en ‘n kurrikulum wat teen ‘n baie vinnige tempo afgehandel moet word, is groot struikelblokke. Die vaslegging van stadige leerders se werk is byna onmoontlik.”*

*“Die klasse is soms te groot. Dit veroorsaak struikelblokke, omdat daar aan alle leerders dieselfde tyd en aandag bestee moet word.”*

They voiced a concern regarding learners who make slow or poor progress in the inclusive education classroom.

*“Baie min tot geen vordering word soms by leerders [referring to individual development and support learners] bespeur.”*

*“Die IOOP [IDSL] leerders werk soms baie stadig en moet ook dieselfde graadvlak werk doen.”*

*“Daar is nie genoeg tyd om individuele aandag te gee nie. Die leerders wat op ‘n baie lae vlak is en wat aandagafleibaar is, lei spesifiek hieronder. Hulle sukkel om hul werk te voltooi en dit raak moeiliker om agterstande in te haal.”*

*“Hierdie leerders [referring to individual development and support learners] se aandagspan is gewoonlik baie kort. Hulle raak gou moeg en stel nie belang in wat in die klas aangaan nie.”*

Additional language was viewed as a challenge in the inclusive education classroom. This aspect was also noted by the learning support professionals and discussed in Category 2.1.1.

*“Xhosa-leerders in ‘n Afrikaans-medium klas veroorsaak ook groot struikelblokke.”*

The participants reported that administrative tasks impact negatively on the teacher’s ability to work effectively. This aspect confirms findings of Ladbrook’s (2009:126) study.

*“Daar is te veel papierwerk.”*

A lack of resources, support and training were reported as impacting negatively on the outcome of inclusive education.

*“Die nodige hulpmiddels en voldoende ondersteuning ontbreek soms en dit maak behoorlike beplanning en volhoubare onderrig nie altyd moontlik nie.”*

*“Die hulp word nie altyd betyds en voldoende aan die skole deur die beleidmakers gemaak om aan sekere leerders se behoeftes te voldoen nie.”*

*“Die hoofstroomskole het nie altyd die fasiliteite om die leerders met gestremdhede en groot agterstande te akkomodeer nie.”*

*“Die aparate om perseptuele probleme aan te spreek is egter nie altyd redelik beskikbaar nie. Die leerders se gehoor en sig word nie gereeld getoets om fisiese probleme uit te skakel nie.”*

*“Toetse om die leerders wat ernstige leerprobleme ondervind, en selfs as onopvoedbaar verklaar kan word, word nie gereeld genoeg gedoen nie.”*

*“Die huidige opvoeders is nie opgelei om die spesialis-ondersteuning aan die leerders te bied wat hulle nodig het nie.”*

*“Oorvol klasse word geïgnoreer in baie gevalle.”*

The influence of learners with specific needs on other learners in the class was also described as an obstacle experienced by teachers.

*“Hulle pla ook die ander leerders as gevolg van hiperaktiwiteit, aandagafleibaarheid, ensovoorts.”*

*“Sommige van hierdie leerders is ‘n steurnis vir die res van die klas.”*

*“Ek persoonlik is geneig om té veel aandag aan stadige leerders te gee en dit veroorsaak dat die vinnige leerders nie hul volle potensiaal bereik nie.”*

Ladbrook (2009:i) notes that *“...challenges at all levels in education, impact on the successful education of children and the future of young adults who must as equal members of society enter a fast changing global economy. Challenges for educators in South Africa are unique. The lack of knowledge and training for educators and an inadequate infrastructure of the country present as some of the challenges for educators”*. The mentioned challenges in Ladbrook’s (2009) study, as well as the present study, confirm the findings from a study conducted by Gwala (2006) regarding challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in the rural areas of Zululand. The findings revealed that teachers were uncertain of their roles in inclusive educations due to a lack of knowledge, little or no experience and inadequate training in teaching learners with learning-barriers. This resulted in a high percentage of educators holding negative attitudes towards inclusion of learners with barriers in learning into regular classrooms. Despite the obstacles, the participants in this present study also described the value of an inclusive approach to education.

### **Sub-theme 6.3: A description of the value of inclusive education**

The participants referred to the social value of inclusive education:

*“As hierdie leerders [referring to individual development and support learners] aan werk blootgestel word wat op hul vlak is, werk hulle goed saam.”*

*“Leerders leer om mekaar te respekteer en te aanvaar. Hulle ondersteun mekaar en leer baie van verskillende kulture en tradisies.”*

*“Leerders leer bymekaar van hul verskillende gebruike, kulture, tradisies en waardes. Hulle leer van mense met verskillende behoeftes en kulture en leer om hulle te respekteer en selfs te ondersteun.”*

Trainer (1991) refers to a value of inclusive education as when learners at a young age are exposed to a diverse group of peers that leads to heightened sensitivity to the challenges that others face, increased empathy and compassion and improved leadership skills; which benefits all of society. It also has a value related to learners' self-esteem, as also discussed in Category 3.1.1, cf. Vialle et al., 2005:38; Ayduk, 2009:1468):

*“Die feit dat die leerders nie minderwaardig voel teenoor die leerders wat ‘normaal’ ontwikkel nie.”*

In further support of the statements discussed in Category 3.1.1, a description of practices that contribute to inclusive education was provided by the participating teachers:

*“Dit werk ook goed om die assesseringstake te differensieer van maklike na moeilike werk.”*

*“Die leerstyle verskil en die leerders word toegelaat om volgens sy leerstyl te leer.”*

*“Die leerders [referring to individual development and support learners] wat op dieselfde vlakke is en in een groep is, werk goed saam. Hierdie leerders maak staat op mekaar se insette en bou so selfvertroue.”*

*“Die groepwerk op die leerders se eie vlak werk baie goed.”*

*“Die leerders se struikelblokke word geïdentifiseer en aangespreek en verskeie strategieë word gebruik (verskillende vaardigheidsgroepe). Die aktiwiteite word gegradeer volgens die vlakke en vermoëns van die leerders.”*

*“Dit werk goed om met die leerders op hul eie vlak in groepsverband te kan werk. Dit werk ook goed dat daar voorsiening gemaak word vir differensiasie in die kurrikulum, beplanning en tydens assessering.”*

## **Theme 7: Teachers' perceptions of learning support**

This theme relates to Theme 1 which described the learning support professionals' perceptions of learning support. The participating teachers described it in terms of what it entails and its purpose:

*“Die leerders se leemtes/leerhindernisse word ontdek en word dan aangespreek in die leerondersteuningsklas.”*

*“Die doel van leerondersteuning is om hulp te verleen aan leerders wat probleme ten opsigte van hul skoolwerk ondervind, byvoorbeeld swakpresteerders, ensovoorts.”*

*“Die leerders word volgens ‘n opgestelde program uit die klasse onttrek vir ‘n uur lank.”*

*“Dit beteken om die leerder in sy volle totaliteit te help ontwikkel en hom in staat stel om besluite te kan neem, probleme te kan identifiseer en op te los deur kritiese en kreatiewe denkvaardighede, asook te kan kommunikeer deur middel van visuele, simboliese en/of taalvaardighede in verskillende vorms.”*

*“Leerondersteuning beteken om spesifiek te fokus op die leerhindernis/probleem van individuele leerders en om aktiwiteite en programme uit te werk om die leerders te help om die leerhindernisse te oorkom/bemeester sodat hulle op hul graadvlak kan begin werk.”*

*“Dit is intervensie/ondersteuning wat deur die klasonderwyser self of die leerondersteuningsopvoeder aan die leerders met leerprobleme gegee word.”*

The participants continued to describe the nature of learning support, the focus thereof and its value. They also described how learners are referred for learning support and the communication and coordination between themselves and the learning support professionals.

### **Sub-theme 7.1: A description of the nature of learning support**

The participants responses are in line with the participating learning support professionals' descriptions of learning support (See Themes 1 and 2).

*“‘n Spesialis op die gebied onttrek die leerders met uitvalle en onderrig hulle as ‘n groep. Perseptuele probleme word in groepsverband aangespreek.”*

*“Ons skool maak gebruik van ‘n leerondersteuningsopvoeder drie dae in ‘n week. Hy onttrek die leerders volgens hul vlak van leer - nie graadvlak-, toets*



*hulle eers en na aanleiding van die toetse gee hy ondersteuningsoefeninge om hul leerprobleme aan te spreek.”*

*“Die probleem van die leerders moet eers geïdentifiseer word, voordat leer en ondersteuning kan plaasvind.”*

Learning support is described as a small group work activity:

*“Die leerondersteuningsgroepe bestaan uit ongeveer 10 leerders.”*

*“Benadering geskied meer op individuele vlak aangesien groepe kleiner en meer hanteerbaar is.”*

*“Die leerondersteuningsopvoeder onttrek leerders in groepe van ongeveer 10 leerders per groep. Die leerders ontvang dan individuele aandag om hulle spesifieke behoeftes aan te spreek.”*

### **Sub-theme 7.2: A description of the focus of learning support**

The aim is to assist learners to become able to learn effectively and to become able to do work independently (see Theme 1 and Sub-theme 3.1).

*“Leerondersteuning moet die leerders help om selfstandig doeltreffend te kan werk.”*

The focus is on specific grades, with a specific focus on mathematics and language and reading skills (cf. JET Education Services, 2010; Van der Berg et al., 2011:1):

*“’n Spesialis onderwyser in leerondersteuning ondersteun verskeie leerders vanaf graad 1 tot graad 6 in tale en wiskunde.”*

*“Die leerders met uitvalle in veral Wiskunde en Huistaal kry ekstra ondersteuning by ’n spesialis of sy onderwyser om die probleem op te los.”*

*“Die leerders wat struikelblokke ervaar ten opsigte van byvoorbeeld lees- en syfervaardighede ontvang leerondersteuning.”*

*“Die leerders kry ondersteuning in Huistaal en Wiskunde, basiese bewerkings.”*

*“Die leerders wat ’n agterstand toon in taal, geletterdheid en wiskunde kry ekstra hulp en ondersteuning.”*

*“Perseptuele vaardighede, geletterdheid en gesyferdheid word aangespreek tydens leerondersteuning.”*

In conclusion, the participating teachers explained that learning support focuses on a concrete level:

*“Die leerdere werk konkreet.”*

*“Die leerdere doen meer praktiese, konkrete werk en leer speel-speel.”*

### **Sub-theme 7.3: A description of the value of learning support**

A participant described this sub-theme in terms of potential. Learning support provides opportunities for all learners to experience success:

*“Alle leerdere kan leer as hulle die nodige ondersteuning ontvang.”*

This sub-theme should be read together with Theme 3. The participating teachers reported that progress is observed:

*“Daar word vordering waargeneem by die leerdere wat leerondersteuning ontvang.”*

*“Die leerdere toon vordering veral in taal. Baie herhaling/vaslegging word in leerondersteuning gedoen.”*

*“Sommige leerdere vind baat by leerondersteuning, omdat hulle vordering toon in die verskillende dissiplines van tale en wiskunde.”*

*“Hulle handskrif verbeter by die dag. Hulle punte verbeter in toetse. Hulle lees verbeter ook.”*

Learners are receiving support on their level of functioning and according to their specific needs (see Sub-theme 3.1):

*“Die leerdere word op hulle vlak gehelp.”*

*“Leerdere werk teen hulle eie tempo en word deurlopend ondersteun totdat hy of sy vordering toon en onafhanklik kan werk.”*

*“Die vaslegging van klanke kan plaasvind veral waar die leerdere sukkel met lees en die leerder op ‘n laer vlak werk as die graad waarin hy of sy is.”*

Learning support contributes to the development of self-esteem (see Category 3.1.1):

*“Die leerdere voel dat hulle behoort.”*

*“Leerdere kry meer selfvertroue. Hulle unieke behoeftes word aangespreek.”*

*“Tydens leerondersteuning kan die leerders makliker kommunikeer, want binne die klas kommunikeer die leerders swaarder met die ander leerders. Hulle praat nie maklik nie, omdat hulle bang is om foute te maak.”*

*“Ek het opgemerk dat die leerders gedurende ‘n tydperk van ses maande wat hulle by leerondersteuning is, hulle meer selfvertroue begin kry.”*

#### **Sub-theme 7.4: Teachers’ description of how learners are referred to learning support services**

Sub-theme 2.1 illustrates the learning support professionals’ descriptions of how learners are being identified and also refer to collaboration between them and teachers. In this sub-theme this topic is supplemented with the descriptions of the participating teachers. They described referrals as follows:

*“Die klasopvoeders identifiseer die leerders in die begin van die jaar, nadat grondlynassessering gedoen is. Die klasopvoeders kommunikeer met die ouers oor die leerders se vordering wat geïdentifiseer is en verwys dan die leerders na die OOS [TSTs]-span en daarna verwys die OOS-span die leerders na die leerondersteuningsopvoeder.”*

*“Die leerders se profiele en uitslae van vorige grade word bestudeer. Die leerders word in die klas self eers deur die klasopvoeder ondersteun nadat hy/sy geëvalueer is en sekere behoeftes/tekortkominge geïdentifiseer is. Die leerder word dan met die ouers bespreek, na die OOS [TSTs] verwys en bespreek, getoets en na die leerondersteuningsopvoeder verwys na sekere aanbevelings deur die OOS gemaak is.”*

The teamwork with the learning support professional is further elaborated on in the next sub-theme.

#### **Sub-theme 7.5: A description of communication and coordination between the learning support professional and the teacher**

The learning support professional participants requested communication between themselves and teachers, as described in Category 5.3.1. The following statements illustrate that the teachers are also in agreement with this requirement:

*“Leerondersteuning werk ook volgens die gebalanseerde taalprogram en gebruik ook van die metodes en strategieë wat die klasopvoeders gebruik.”*

*“Leerondersteuning is ‘n verlengstuk van die klasopvoeder.” [see Sub-theme 3.2]*

*“Deurlopende kommunikasie geskied tussen die leerondersteuningsopvoeder en die klasopvoeders. Die leerders word volgens ‘n opgestelde program uit die klasse onttrek vir ‘n uur lank.”*

*“Die res van die week gee die klasopvoeder ondersteuningswerk aan die leerders.”*

### **Theme 8: Teachers’ perceptions of obstacles related to effective learning support**

Theme 4 focused on the learner professionals’ descriptions of limitations experienced by them when delivering learning support. They reported that teachers are often not positive when learners have to leave classrooms (see Sub-theme 4.4). The teachers described this aspect in terms of learners missing out on class work or affecting the classroom activities:

*“Die onttrekking van ‘n groep veroorsaak dat jy nie lekker kan voortgaan met die werk met die leerders wat oorbly in die klas nie. In sulke gevalle doen ons verbeteringe of voltooi onafgehandelde werk of tuiswerk.”*

*“In leerondersteuningsessie-tyd wat die leerders onttrek word, kan daar nie nuwe konsepte aangeleer word nie, want die leerders sukkel te veel om agterstande in te haal.”*

*“Die onttrekking van die leerders is soms ongeleë en hulle raak agter met hul gewone werk.”*

*“Die onttrekking van die leerders uit die klasse veroorsaak soms dat die leerders agter raak met hulle werk in die klas.”*

Obstacles related to referrals for learning support are experienced:

*“Die kriteria waarvolgens leerders IOOP [IDSL] verklaar word is ‘n probleem. Die kriteria waarvolgens die leerders in my klas IOOP verklaar is, stem nie ooreen met die distrikskantoor se kriteria nie.”*

The participating learning support professionals recommended that they work at one school only (see Sub-themes 4.3 and 5.1) to ensure availability and continuity. Ladbrook (2009:136) recommends that more learning support professionals be

appointed to support teachers to implement inclusive education effectively. This is supported by the participating teachers. They reported a lack of access to learning support:

*“Die behoeftes van alle leerders kan nie regtig aangespreek word nie. Daar is meer leerders wat hulp nodig het, maar die tyd en mannekrag is nie na wense nie.”*

*“Daar is té veel leerders wat vir leerondersteuning moet gaan en dit veroorsaak dat die leerders byvoorbeeld nie meer as een keer per week onttrek kan word nie en leerondersteuning een keer per week is nie voldoende vir hierdie leerders nie.”*

*“Leerondersteuning by skole kom nie tot sy reg nie, omdat een opvoeder verantwoordelik is om leerders met verskeie onderwysbehoefte by skole te ondersteun.”*

*“Die feit dat die leerondersteuningsopvoeder twee skole moet dien. Twee dae by die skool is nie voldoende nie. Verder raak die getal leerders wat leerondersteuning moet ontvang net meer.”*

*“Die leerondersteuningsopvoeder by ons skool is, is te min om voluit ondersteuning aan die leerders te gee.”*

Also in support of the learning support professionals’ descriptions, a lack of resources for learning support (See Sub-theme 4.3):

*“Akkommodasie is ook ‘n probleem.”*

### **Sub-theme 8.1: A concern related to the long-term value for learners**

Confirming the concern voiced by the learning support professionals (See Sub-theme 4.6), the participating teachers reported a concern regarding the long-term outcomes of learning support:

*“Na ‘n sekere ouderdom word hulle verwys na vaardigheidskole, maar na ‘n sekere ouderdom bly hulle by die huis. Daar is niks waarop voortgebou kan word nie.”*

*“Baie leerders verlaat skool vroeg en het nie werk nie.”*

The final theme, discussed below, is linked to Theme 5.

### **Theme 9: Educators' recommendations related to effective learning support**

Similar to the discussion in Sub-theme 4.3, the teachers who participated in this study referred to a preferred smaller group size (Cf. Kutnick and Blatchford, 2013:28):

*“Die groepe moet nie te groot wees nie.”*

In line with the recommendations in Sub-theme 5.7, the participating teachers referred to specific focus and the nature of learning support as follows:

*“Daar kan meer op spesifieke vaardighede gekonsentreer word, byvoorbeeld motoriese ontwikkeling.”*

*“Konkrete werk, byvoorbeeld knip, plak, skeur, ens. werk baie goed vir hierdie leerders. Speletjies werk ook baie goed.”*

Sub-themes 4.3 and 5.1 and Theme 8 above refer to the need for availability of learning support professionals (cf. Ladbrook, 2009:136). This aspect is again highlighted in this theme:

*“Elke skool behoort ‘n permanente/voltydse leerondersteuningsopvoeder te hê wat nou saamwerk met die betrokke adviseur en distrikskantoor.”*

*“‘n Leerondersteuningsopvoeder moet aan elke skool toegeken word na aanleiding van die behoefte/getalle en voorsien ‘n lokaal waar nodig.”*

*“Die leerondersteuningsopvoeder moet voltyds by die skool wees.”*

The participants, similar to Sub-theme 4.3 and Theme 8, referred to resources that must be available:

*“Hulle [learning support professionals] moet ook goed toegerus word met die nodige hulpmiddels en ondersteuning soos nodig.”*

The participants also recommended learning support as part of classroom activities, the empowerment of teachers to utilise learning support effectively and separate learning opportunities to ensure long-term impacts.

### **Sub-theme 9.1: Support to learners within the classroom**

This sub-theme relates to the challenges experienced in the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom. Participants requested assistance to support them in the classrooms.

*“Assistente is nodig in alle klasse.”*

*“Daar moet klasassistentie aangestel word vir oorvol klasse.”*

*“Die administratiewe take moet drasties verminder word, sodat meer leer aandag kan geniet.”*

Giangreco (2013:2, 6) refers to classroom assistants as a necessary mechanism to support inclusive education. A need to explore this mechanism is advised, as “... *service delivery models that effectively incorporate special education supports within general education classes have not necessarily kept pace, resulting in some cases of less than optimal use of resources and potentially inadequate support for both students and teachers*”.

### **Sub-theme 9.2: Empowerment of teachers to implement learning support in inclusive education**

Although the Education White Paper 6 was introduced in 2001, it appears from the following statements that teachers are still struggling with its implementation and that more training is needed:

*“Opvoeders in skole moet opgelei word om inklusiewe onderrig tot sy reg te laat kom.”*

*“Die inklusiewe onderwys in die klaskamer sal doeltreffend werk as ek meer blootgestel word hoe om dit te implementeer.”*

This description confirms the findings of Gwala’s study (2006), as described in Sub-theme 6.2 and the recommendation by Ladbrook (2009:135) regarding the need for adequate training.

### **Sub-theme 9.3: Separate learning opportunities to have long-term impacts**

As mentioned in Sub-themes 5.7 and 8.1, the following recommendation confirms the need to reassess the long-term value of learning support:

*“Aparte klasse is nodig vir die leerders wat baie stadige vordering toon.”*

*“Vaardigheidskole moet meer moeite doen met die leerders en die pad met hulle stap totdat hulle ‘n werk kry.”*

*“Daar kan meer vaardigheidskole geskep word. Hoewel alle leerders met leerprobleme leerders in openbare skole opgeneem is voel ek hulle sou meer baat vind en vorder in ‘n vaardigheidskool waar hulle handwerk doen om hulle vir die wêreld daarbuite voor te berei.”*

*“Daar moet meer vaardigheidskole wees vir leerders wat erge uitvalle toon.”*

*“Hierdie leerders moet toegelaat word om hulle volle potensiaal by ‘n vaardigheidskool te ontwikkel. Dit bemagtig hulle vir die arbeidsmark en maak van hulle goeie burgers vir die samelewing. Eiewaarde word in die proses gekweek.”*

*“‘n Aanbeveling is dat alle leerders wat uitvalle openbaar en struikelblokke ervaar in ‘n spesiale klas geplaas word, waar hulle op hulle eie pas onderrig kan ontvang.”*

## **4.5 Conclusion**

The findings related to both the learner professional and teacher participants’ perceptions and experiences related to the nature of learning support in rural schools were described and discussed in this chapter. The findings were subjected to a literature control as form of verification and to add to a thorough description. Chapter 5 will conclude this research document with summaries, conclusions and recommendations related to the research methodology and the findings.



## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, conclusions and recommendations

#### 5.1 Introduction

This research study was based on the following two questions: “What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by learning support professionals?” and “What is the nature of learning support in rural schools as experienced by teachers?” The questions arose from a literature review that informed the research problem as described in Chapter 1 of this document. In order to address this research problem, the aim of this study was to explore and describe the nature of learning support in rural schools based on the perspectives and experiences of teachers and learning support professionals, in order to provide learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities with recommendations to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools.

The background rational for this study, based on a literature review, the theoretical framework that guided this study and the research problem were discussed in Chapter 1. This was followed by a description of the research question, aim and objectives and the chosen methodology to implement this research study. Chapter 2 consisted of a literature review that served as a literature control of the research findings. Chapter 3 provided a thick description of the implementation of the research methodology, the ethical practice and the challenges experienced in this study. The findings were discussed in Chapter 4. In this chapter, the research methodology and findings will be summarised, a conclusion will be drawn and the researcher will make recommendations that serve as recommendations to learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities to ensure that the aim of this research study is attained.

## 5.2 The research methodology: Summary, conclusion and recommendations

### 5.2.1 Summary of the research methodology

This study was conducted from a qualitative research approach. The contextual, explorative and descriptive research designs were used to provide the researcher with a strategic framework to obtain scientifically valid data.

Two populations were identified. These two populations were viewed as “the insiders” in the research topic that were best informed to answer the research question. The populations were:

- **Population 1:** All teachers at rural schools in the Western Cape
- **Population 2:** All learning support professionals at rural schools in the Western Cape

The non-probability sampling method was employed as the researcher made use of data saturation to determine the sample size. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants through the following sampling criteria:

- From the population of teachers at rural schools: All Grade 1 to 6 teachers at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5)
- From the population of learning support professionals at rural schools: All learning support professionals at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5) who are qualified teachers with a minimum experience of two years in learning support

The researcher made contact with the education authorities and obtained written consent to conduct the research study in the rural area chosen for this study. He then made contact with possible participants, explained the purpose and nature of the study to them and obtained informed consent for voluntary participation. Semi-structured interviews followed. These interviews were based on the following guiding questions that ensured the findings would address the research problem:

**Table 5.1:** Interview guide

Questions to the learning support professional participants	Questions to the teacher participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe your understanding of learning support.</li> <li>• How is it implemented at your school/schools where you work?</li> <li>• What are the obstacles that you experience regarding learning support in a rural area?</li> <li>• What in your opinion works well regarding learning support in a rural school?</li> <li>• What would you like to recommend regarding future planning of learning support in rural schools?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your perception of the term 'inclusive education'?</li> <li>• What is your perception of the term 'learning support'?</li> <li>• How do you implement inclusive education in your classroom?</li> <li>• How is learning support provided at your school?</li> <li>• What are the obstacles you experience related to inclusive education and learning support?</li> <li>• What, in your opinion, works well regarding inclusive education and learning support?</li> <li>• What would you like to recommend regarding future implementation of learning support to ensure successful inclusive education in rural schools?</li> </ul>

Fourteen learning support professionals and nine primary school educators and principals at Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5) participated in this research study. The semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and field notes were taken. The tape recordings and the field notes were transcribed and analysed according to the framework provided by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186). The qualitative data was verified by the use of Guba's model for the verification of qualitative data (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) to ensure the validity of a qualitative research study.

Ethical practice was based on the principle of not harming the participants, privacy and confidentiality, and informed consent. Participation was voluntary and participants were able to withdraw at any time.

## 5.2.2 Conclusion

The qualitative research approach is viewed to be well suited when exploring experiences and perceptions. The interview guide ensured that the semi-structured

interviews remained focused on the research topic, while the open-ended questions allowed for further exploration of the topic.

The use of the contextual research design enabled the researcher to contextualise this study in terms of rural schools. It therefore supported the aim of this research study well. The explorative research design assisted the researcher with choices related to the population and sampling, as well as with data collection methods. The descriptive research design worked well as a support to the explorative design, as it informed the choices regarding data collection and analysis methods.

The use of the non-probability sampling method, together with the purposive sampling technique assisted the researcher to explore and describe the research question within the real-life situation of the participants. The use of data saturation to determine the sample size worked well, as the researcher was able to ensure that no new topics or ideas were presented before terminating the data collection stage of this study.

The eight steps used to analyse the data ensured a systematic manner of data analysis. The method of data verification assisted the researcher well to ensure the validity of the findings. The truth value was enhanced by means of triangulation of sources (obtaining data from the two populations mentioned above) and the use of interviewing techniques. Applicability was obtained through description of the research methodology implemented in this study, purposive sampling and triangulation of sources. The researcher was able to ensure consistency through description of the research methodology implemented in this study and neutrality was enhanced through the use of interviewing techniques, tape recordings and field notes, as well as an independent coder.

The use of invitation letters with a detailed description of the research study, together with informed consent forms (see Annexure A and B) assisted the researcher with the implementation of ethical research practice.

It is therefore concluded that the chosen research methodology successfully assisted the researcher to attain the aim of this study, and to answer the research question. However, the following **challenges** were experienced: Most of the participants in this

study represented the female gender. The descriptions and findings are therefore primarily based on a female perspective, which could be viewed as a limitation. The researcher was challenged with regards to finding suitable times for the interviews, as the teachers and learning support professionals were only available to do interviews when no school activities took place.

### **5.2.3 Recommendations**

The conclusion above was used to make the following recommendations regarding the research methodology:

- When attempting to obtain information that adds to the knowledge base of a profession, based on an exploration of perceptions and experiences of “insiders” in the research field, it is recommended that a qualitative approach be considered.
- The explorative and descriptive research designs are well suited when a topic of which little is known is the focus of a research study.
- When attempting to answer a research question that is focused on a specific area within the field of the research topic, the contextual research design is viewed as suitable to provide a framework for sampling methods and techniques, as well as for data collection and analysis methods.
- The purposive sampling technique is recommended when a qualitative study is aimed at exploring and describing the experiences and perceptions of specific group/groups of people and works well in combination with the mentioned research designs.
- Systematic steps to be followed to identify themes and sub-themes provide a scientifically sound means from which conclusions can be drawn, and to ensure objectivity.
- The use of a literature control assists researchers with a thorough description of the findings, and also with drawing conclusions.

The methodology described in this sub-section assisted the researcher to make conclusions and recommendations regarding the findings. This will be discussed next.

### 5.3 Research findings: Summary, conclusion and recommendations

As mentioned above, two populations were included in this study. The findings were presented separately in Chapter 3 of this document. It will be summarised as follows:

#### 5.3.1: Summary of the findings

**Learning support professionals'** perceptions and experiences related to the nature of learning support in rural schools were described through five themes.

- **Theme 1** described the participants' understanding of the term 'learning support'.
- **Theme 2** illustrated the participants' descriptions of the nature of learning support. They described how learners are identified to receive learning support and provided a description of the learners who receive learning support. The planning of learning support was reported on. The provision of learning support was described as primarily in a group context and learning support is provided differently to different grades. Participants described the nature of learning support in rural schools in terms of working at more than one school. They described feedback procedures and support services available to them.
- **Theme 3** focused on the participants' perceptions of the value of learning support. They explained that it provides specialised support outside of the classroom environment and that learners with needs for learning support are provided with individual support in a relaxed environment that contributes to positive self-esteem. The participants also reported that learning support provides teachers with support and that planning and coordination with the curriculum is of value to the learning support professional.
- **Theme 4** highlighted aspects that were perceived as limitations regarding the provision of learning support. The participants reported that working with large groups limit the quality of attention to individual learners and that they found it difficult to deliver services at more than one school. Furthermore, a lack of infrastructure and resources were reported. The participants experienced that collaboration between the learning support professional and the teacher was lacking and that a further limitation is the unavailability of the learning support advisor or lack of coordination by the learning support advisor. This theme was concluded with a description of how a lack of alternative assessments and

options to develop alternative skills among learners with learning needs was experienced as a limitation.

- **Theme 5** provided a description of the participants' perceptions of what is needed for effective learning support to take place. They asserted that learning support professionals should work at one school only and that learning support should be provided in small groups to ensure individual attention. The participants were of the opinion that learning support professionals should be involved in the overall progress of the learner and that specific criterion for learning support is needed and should be communicated to the schools. They emphasised that cooperation and communication between all role-players should be ensured and that support from the learning support advisors and collaboration with curriculum advisors are needed. The latter also entails that in-service training opportunities for learning support professionals should be created. Lastly, they reported that support services and resources should be available to learning support professionals.

**Teachers'** perceptions and experiences related to the nature of learning support in rural schools were described through four themes.

- **Theme 6** provided descriptions of the participating teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. It also illustrates how teachers approach inclusive education and highlights challenges experienced related to inclusive education. A description of the value of inclusive education is also provided.
- **Theme 7** focused on the participants' perceptions of learning support in terms of the nature, focus and value of learning support. The participants included a description of how learners are referred to learning support services. They also described the communication and coordination between the learning support professional and the teacher.
- **Theme 8** portrayed the participating teachers' perceptions of obstacles related to effective learning support, and as specific concern related to the long-term value for learners.
- **Theme 9** described the participants' recommendations related to effective learning support. They focused on support to learners within the classroom and the need for empowerment of teachers to implement learning support in inclusive

education. They also recommended separate learning opportunities to have a long-term impact.

The conclusions made, based on the findings will be discussed next.

### **5.3.2 Conclusion**

The findings described in the previous sub-section are based on data obtained from two population groups. The conclusion will be drawn by means of a comparison of the two sets of findings.

This research study was furthermore based on the theoretical framework of the biological model to educational change and development. The conclusions from the findings will therefore also be presented in terms of how the different findings relate to the theoretical framework. The conclusions are presented in the table below.



**Table 5.2:** Conclusion related to the research findings in terms of the bio-ecological framework to educational change and development

Learning support professionals	Description	Link to bio-ecological model to educational change and development	Teachers	Description
		<p>It includes all the relevant resources to understand and address barriers to learning; a community-based approach which focuses on drawing on local and indigenous resources in the process of providing support; and an understanding of problems and their solutions in a “systems” framework which emphasises the need for system transformation (e.g. institutional and curriculum development) (Landsberg, 2005:15; Bronfenbrenner, 2005:1).</p>	<p>Teachers’ descriptions of inclusive education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive education as a means to combat social exclusion and discrimination.</li> <li>• It is more than merely focusing on learners with special needs. Inclusive education also involves acknowledging diversity in the South African society (i.e. ethnicity, language, etc.).</li> <li>• Differentiation as a manner in which to determine the needs of different learners according to which activities are being presented.</li> <li>• Group work is identified as a teaching method.</li> <li>• Specific skills are needed by the teacher.</li> <li>• Systemic challenges to implement inclusive education.</li> <li>• A concern regarding learners who make slow or poor progress in the inclusive education classroom.</li> <li>• Administrative tasks impact negatively on the teacher’s ability to work effectively.</li> <li>• A lack of resources, support and training were reported as impacting negatively on the outcome of inclusive education.</li> <li>• The influence of learners with specific needs on other learners in the class was also described as an obstacle experienced by teachers.</li> <li>• The participants referred to the social value of inclusive education.</li> <li>• It also has a value related to learners’ self-esteem.</li> <li>• A description of practices that contribute to inclusive education is provided.</li> </ul>

Learning support professionals	Description	Link to bio-ecological model to educational change and development	Teachers	Description
Participants' understanding of the term 'learning support'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A form of support to both teachers and learners, not aimed at a specific level and it could be done in separate groups or in the classroom.</li> <li>• Learning support should be based on a) the needs of the different learners in b) different schools, as well as c) the expectations of the Department of Basic Education.</li> <li>• Extra responsibilities related to learning support at the schools where learning support professionals work</li> <li>• A means to develop potential.</li> <li>• Specific focus areas of learning support: Mathematics and reading</li> </ul>	The purpose of inclusive education is not only to "allow" all learners to enter the mainstream school system, but to provide them with opportunities, resources and support to reach their potential. The bio-ecological model places the focus on developing an environment that would be conducive to optimal growth and development.	Teachers' perceptions of learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It requires specialised input.</li> <li>• It could occur in the classroom or during separate sessions with learners with special needs.</li> <li>• The aim is to assist learners to become able to learn effectively and to become able to do work independently</li> </ul>
Participant's descriptions of the nature of learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments involve the teacher and the learning support professionals</li> <li>• Learners with special needs are often exposed to socio-economic challenges.</li> <li>• Learners need support in specific areas to become able to function successfully in mainstream schools.</li> <li>• Parents and the social context are not included in the assessments.</li> <li>• Learning support takes place in a group context.</li> <li>• Support is provided differently in terms of grades, subjects or in mainstream and skills training classes.</li> <li>• Learning support professionals deliver services at different schools.</li> <li>• Feedback procedures and support services (or lack thereof in rural schools) available to learning support professionals are described in terms of the human resource component.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Education's Operational Manual to the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2008:22): "...bring support to the learner, rather than take the learner to the support".</li> <li>• The Department of Education (2005b:5): Inclusive education through district-based support teams - "... targeted outreach programme, beginning in Government's rural and urban development nodes".</li> <li>• Teams should include psychologists, specialised and general counsellors, therapists and other health and welfare workers employed by the department of education, and various learning support personnel</li> <li>• The Department of Education (2005b:6): Learners who are eligible for learning support - learners who experience barriers to learning in terms of communication; contextual, social and behaviour factors; safety</li> </ul>	Teachers' perceptions of learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning support is described as a small group work activity</li> <li>• The focus is on specific grades</li> <li>• The focus is on mathematics and language and reading skills</li> <li>• Learning support focuses on a concrete level.</li> </ul>

		<p>and access to the learning environment; health, wellness and personal care and learners who experience socio-economic challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning should include various interventions at any level of the 'system', such as an intervention with the learner or educator; transformation of some aspect of the curriculum; development of the institutional environment; or addressing particular family, community or social factors.</li> <li>• Collaboration between professionals as an important strategy of support for inclusive education.</li> </ul>		
Participants' perceptions of the value of learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The value of individualised support, as well as extra time to achieve potential and specific methods that encourage development and growth</li> <li>• Alignment of their work with the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement to ensure that their work with the learners forms a link with the work in the classroom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus on self-esteem as part of learning support is based on the viewpoint by many educators that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement (Vialle et al., 2005:39).</li> <li>• Effective teaching is dependent on the development of effective curricular and supportive teaching and learning environments (Education White Paper 6, 2001:17).</li> </ul>	Teachers' perceptions of learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning support provides opportunities for all learners to experience success</li> <li>• Progress is observed</li> <li>• Learners are receiving support on their level of functioning and according to their specific needs</li> <li>• Learning support contributes to the development of self-esteem</li> </ul>
Aspects that perceived as limitations regarding the provision of learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering support services at more than one school,</li> <li>• A lack of infrastructure and resources,</li> <li>• A lack of cooperation between learning support professionals and teachers,</li> <li>• Unavailability or a lack of collaboration by the advisor.</li> <li>• A lack of alternative options for learners with special needs.</li> </ul>	The benefits of learning support for learners should be, among others that learners learn from each other, support and challenge one another and that it provides a structured environment where learners are actively engaged in the learning activities.	Teachers' perceptions of obstacles related to effective learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption of classroom activities</li> <li>• Obstacles regarding referral criteria</li> <li>• Lack of availability of learning support professionals</li> <li>• A concern regarding the long-term value for learners</li> </ul>
Descriptions of what is needed for effective learning support to take place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning support professionals should work at one school only, and this support should be provided in small groups to ensure individual attention.</li> <li>• Learning support professionals should be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaffolding can be used as support given during the learning process. This support is tailored to the needs of the learner with the intention of helping the learner achieve his/her</li> </ul>	Educators' recommendations related to effective learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A preferred smaller group size</li> <li>• A need for availability of learning support professionals</li> <li>• Resources must be available</li> <li>• Participants requested</li> </ul>

	<p>involved in the overall progress of the learner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific criteria for learning support are needed and should be communicated to the schools, and cooperation and communication between all role-players should be ensured.</li> <li>• Support from the learning support advisors and collaboration with curriculum advisors are needed, including in-service training opportunities.</li> <li>• Support services and resources should be available and learning support professionals should receive specific recognition to enable them to make recommendations.</li> <li>• Specialised subjects to enable holistic progress should be included in <b>learning</b> support programmes.</li> </ul>	<p>learning goals (Sawyer, 20067).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For effective scaffolding, resources are needed and it requires consistent and on-going modelling and coaching. Sweller, et al. (2007:117) advice that effective support requires regular and consistent input. Support should provide learners with multiple types of guidance that interact and reinforce each other.</li> <li>• Mezzo and macro levels that need to be included in communication processes in learning support (Cf. Bronfenbrenner, 2005)</li> </ul>		<p>assistance to support them in the classrooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the Education White Paper 6 was introduced in 2001, it appears from the statements that teachers are still struggling with the implementation of inclusive education and that more training is needed</li> <li>• Need to reassess the long-term value of learning support</li> </ul>
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### 5.3.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to serve as recommendations for learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools.

- Learning support, and the role and function of the learning support professional, should focus on support to –
  - Learners,
  - Teachers,
  - Parents and
  - Environmental challenges that impact on teaching and learning.
- The nature of learning support should consistently be focused on the development of the learners' potential.
  - Assessments and planning should include inputs from the teacher and parents; and planning by the learning support professional should be coordinated and supported by the different role-players (i.e. the district learning support advisor, the principals, the teachers and the parents).
  - Specific training opportunities for learning support professionals and teachers, related to skills and knowledge needed to support learners effectively, should be identified and made available by the learning support advisor.
- Clear guidelines are needed regarding how the needs of the learners (i.e. taking micro and mezzo levels of functioning into consideration) can be addressed; while requirements and needs of the different schools (i.e. based on the social context where the school is situated) are linked to the expectations of the Department of Basic Education.
  - The learning support advisor should ensure that there is a clear link between the requirements of the Department of Basic Education and the needs of learners, as identified through assessments. The Department should be informed should specific needs that are not effectively addressed through the Department's guidelines are identified.
- The specific needs of learners should be identified during the assessments and linked with the availability of resources and infrastructure at the specific schools. Should it not be possible to address these specific needs within the classroom

and/or school, alternative teaching and learning opportunities within the community should be made available. The role of the advisor as a link between the context of the service and the Department is again highlighted.

- The alignment of learning support activities with the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement to ensure that work with the learners forms a link with the work in the classroom should be ensured through collaboration between the learning support professional, teachers, principal and learning support advisor.
  - Strategies for learning support should be aimed at the desired outcomes of the different levels.
  - Strategies should include classroom-based support as well as individualised support.
  - Groups that receive learning support should not be too large (between four and six learners at a time).
- Learning support professionals in rural schools should work at one school only and this professional should focus efforts on linking resources that could assist the learners to reach full potential. Such resources include professional services of therapists, social workers and health professionals, as well as social support by parents, communities and community resources.
  - Needed infrastructure is crucial to ensure effective learning support. This includes classrooms, stationary and learning materials.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This study explored the nature of learning support to learners in rural schools, as perceived and experienced by learning support professionals and teachers working at rural schools. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to describe the exploration and to draw conclusions, based on the findings and a literature control.

The conclusions are linked to the bio-ecological model to educational change and development as framework for effective inclusive education practice. It is envisaged that the recommendations will serve as a guideline for learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural learning.

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**Annexure A: Letter of invitation to teachers in primary schools and Learning Support Educators in the Cape Winelands Education District rendering learning support in Circuit 5 (Worcester, Rawsonville, Wolsley, Ceres and Tulbagh).**

**For Attention:** \_\_\_\_\_

I, John-Frederich Swart, the undersigned, am a learning support educator in Service of the Western Cape Education Department (Cape Winelands Education District – circuit 5), and also a part-time M.Ed student in the Department of Education and Social Science, Cape Peninsula University of Technology – Wellington Campus. In fulfilment of requirements for the M.Ed degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic: **The nature of learning support in rural schools.**

In view of the fact that you are currently teaching or providing learning support in the Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5), I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study. The purpose of the study is not to evaluate you as a teacher or learning support teacher, but to investigate the nature of learning support in rural schools and to provide recommendations for learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities and to contribute to the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools. For you to decide whether or not to participate in the research project, I will provide you with:

- Information regarding the need for the study;
- The goal of the study;
- What you will be requested to do during the study;
- The risks and benefits involved by participating in this research projects, and
- Your rights as a participant.

The *aim of the research study* is to explore and describe the nature of learning support in rural schools, in order to provide learning support professionals, teachers

and education authorities with recommendations to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools.

Should you agree to participate, you would be requested to participate in one interview. It is estimated that the interview will last approximately 60 minutes. During the interview the following questions will be directed to you.

- Describe your understanding of learning support.
- How is it implemented at your school/schools where you work?
- What are the obstacles that you experience regarding learning support in a rural area?
- What in your opinion works well regarding learning support in a rural area?
- What would you like to recommend regarding future planning of learning support in rural schools?

With your permission, the interview will be audio taped. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview (both the taped and transcribed version) will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotape will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The tapes will be stored in a safe place and only I will have access to them. The transcripts (without identifying information) will be made available to my research study leader, a translator (if needed) and an independent coder with sole purpose of assisting and guiding me with this research undertaking. They will each sign an undertaking to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner. The audiotapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed upon completion of this study. Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. Agreement to sign the attached consent form does not compromise your rights of participation in any way. If you agree you have still the right to withdraw your consent at any time during the study. However, if you do withdraw from the study, you would be requested to grant me an opportunity to engage in informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an orderly manner. As the researcher, I also have the right to dismiss you from the study, if you fail to follow the instructions or that it appears that you want to use the study as a platform to promote an individual needs which will not be part of the study.

You are included in this research as a possible participant because you comply with the following **criteria for inclusion**:

- From the population of teachers at rural schools: All Grade 1 to 6 teachers at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5)
- From the population of learning support professionals at rural schools: All learning support professionals who are qualified teachers with a minimum experience of two years in learning support at primary schools in the rural area of Cape Winelands Education District (Circuit 5)

If you have any questions/concerns about the study, contact me at the following numbers: 082 390 9925/028 542 1342. Please note that this study has been approved by the Research Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Should you have any questions/queries not sufficiently addressed by me, you are more than welcome to contact my study promoter, Dr M.A. Van der Westhuizen, telephone number: 021-8731181, or e-mail: [mvdw@hugenote.com](mailto:mvdw@hugenote.com).

Based upon the above provided information and rights of the participants, you are requested to give written consent, should you want to participate in this research study. Attached please find the consent form.

Thank you for your participation.

John-Frederich Swart

## Annexure B: Informed Consent Form

### An investigation on the nature of learning support in rural schools:

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: the nature of learning support in rural schools.

REFERENCE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANT: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER: John-Frederich Swart

Address: PO Box 263

Bredasdorp

7280

Contact numbers: 082 3909925

028 5421342

<p>DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE PARTICIPANT:</p> <p>I, THE UNDERSIGNED _____ (name), (ID No: _____) the participant or in my capacity as _____ of the participant (ID No _____) of _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(address)</p> <p>A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:</p> <p>1. I/the participant was invited to participate in the above research project which is being undertaken by John-Frederich Swart under the guidance of the Department of Education and Social Science, Cape Peninsula University of Technology.</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>
<p>2. The following aspects have been explained to me/the participant: Aim: The researcher is undertaking a research project with the aim to explore and describe the nature of learning support in rural schools based on the perspectives and experiences of teachers and learning support professionals, in order to provide learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities with guidelines to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools.</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>
<p>2.1 I understand that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will have access to the results of the project;</li> <li>• My/the participant's anonymity is ensured and that I/he/she will enter this project on a voluntary basis;</li> <li>• I/myself, on behalf of the participant, can withdraw from the project at any time;</li> <li>• Only the researcher, translator (if needed), editor, independent coder and the researcher's promoters will have access to the data.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>
<p>2.2 I identify the following concerns and possible risks in the study: The information that I share might unsettle me emotionally. Should that in</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>



<p>any way happen, I may voluntarily withdraw from the study without penalty. Should the researcher come to the conclusion that this exercise is harming me in any way, he might exercise the right to withdraw me from the study and/or refer me for counselling services/or other appropriate resources of service delivery, which I have the right to decide whether or not to use.</p> <p>Other concerns:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>2.3 <u>Possible benefits:</u> As a result of my participation in this study I understand that it could provide recommendations to learning support professionals, teachers and education authorities, to ensure the effective development and implementation of learning support strategies in rural schools.</p> <p>Other benefits:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	Initial
<p>3. The above information was explained to me by _____ (in his/her capacity as _____ researcher/ _____ translator) in Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other_____. I confirm that I am in command of Afrikaans_____, English_____, Xhosa_____, and Other_____. I was given the opportunity to ask question and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.</p>	Initial
<p>4. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participate and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage form the study without penalty.</p>	Initial
<p>5. Participants in the study will not result in any additional cost.</p>	Initial
<p><b>B. I HEREBY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE PROJECT.</b></p> <p>Signed/confirmed at _____ on _____ 20__</p> <p>_____ Signature or right thumbprint of participant</p> <p>_____ Signature of Witness</p>	Initial

### Statement by the researcher, translator, promoter and independent coder

<p><b>DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER</b></p> <p>I, _____, declare that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have explained the information given in this document to _____ and/or his/her representative _____;</li> <li>• He/she was encourage and given ample time to ask any questions;</li> <li>• This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans/ English, Xhosa/other</li> </ul>	Initial:
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<p>_____ and this conversation was translated into _____ by _____.</p> <p>Signed at _____ on _____ 20 _____.</p> <p>_____ Signature of investigator/representative</p> <p>_____ Signature of witness</p>	
<p><b>DECLARATION BY TRANSLATOR</b></p> <p>I, _____, confirm that I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translated the content of this document from English into _____ to the participant/participant's representative;</li> <li>• Explained the content of this document to the participant/participant's representative;</li> <li>• Also translate the question posed by _____, as well as the answers given by the investigator/representative, and</li> <li>• Conveyed a factually correct version of what was related to me.</li> </ul> <p>Signed at _____ on _____ 20 _____.</p> <p>_____ Signature of investigator/representative</p> <p>_____ Signature of witness</p>	<p><u>Initial:</u></p>
<p><b>DECLARATION OF PROMOTOR</b></p> <p>I, _____, confirm that I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had access to the transcripts of the data obtained through the study;</li> <li>• I did not have access to any information that could enable me to identify the participants; and</li> <li>• I will adhere to the agreement by confidentiality relating to the data obtained.</li> </ul> <p>Signed at _____ on _____ 20 _____.</p> <p>_____ Signature of investigator/representative</p> <p>_____ Signature of witness</p>	<p><u>Initial:</u></p>
<p><b>DECLARATION BY INDEPENDENT CODER</b></p> <p>I, _____, confirm that I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had access to the transcripts of the data obtained through this study;</li> <li>• I did not have access to any information that could enable me to identify the participants; and</li> <li>• I will adhere to the agreement of confidentiality relating to the data obtained.</li> </ul> <p>Signed at _____ on _____ 20 _____.</p> <p>_____ Signature of investigator/representative</p> <p>_____ Signature of witness</p>	<p><u>Initial:</u></p>