

**EVALUATING
A
TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM PROGRAMME**

by

SHANE WHEELER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Technology

in the Faculty of Science

at the Peninsula Technikon

Supervisor: Dr Beatrice Thuynsma

March 2005

**EVALUATING
A
TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM PROGRAMME**

by

SHANE WHEELER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Technology

in the Faculty of Science

at the Peninsula Technikon

Supervisor: Dr Beatrice Thuynsma

March 2005

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own work, and opinions contained herein are my own and not necessarily those of the Technikon.


.....

SHANE WHEELER

14.02.2005
.....

DATE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere thanks and gratitude are extended to the following persons:

- ❖ Dr Beatrice Thuynsma, my supervisor, for her guidance, patience, advice and encouragement throughout this project.

- ❖ Jeremy Koeberg, Prof. Chris Winberg, and Jenny Wright of the Peninsula Technikon, for their guidance, encouragement and kind assistance.

- ❖ My family and friends for their love, encouragement and support.

- ❖ My son's, Clayton Wheeler and Keanan Wheeler, who endured and gave willing of their time.

- ❖ My wife, Charlene Wheeler who laboured beside me to help me achieve my goal.

- ❖ To God, through whom all things are made possible.

ABSTRACT

The ability to collaborate effectively is important for educators who have to work together to serve learners who have learning disabilities in general education classrooms. The rationale for this study was to evaluate school-based assistance. The study focused on the conceptualisation, design, implementation and impact of a Teacher Support Team programme, as implemented at a primary school.

The literature review surveyed the provision of education support services, and the initiation, development and implementation of the Teacher Support Team. The main objectives were to establish whether effective collaboration requires that educators have knowledge and skills that they share with one another for the purpose of solving classroom problems. It also sought to highlight the importance of collaboration among professional staff.

This research project is a case study of a school-based support team and the educators' perception of a Teacher Support Team Programme as implemented at his school. The research was conducted by using qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative methods included collecting data by means of individual semi-structured interviews with a psychologist, the deputy principal, the coordinator of the Teacher Support Team and educators who serve on the Teacher Support Team. The quantitative data consisted of a questionnaire, which the educators completed. Learners and parents were excluded

from this study, as the aim was to determine the impact of the Teacher Support Team Programme as perceived by the professional staff with a view to further development of the Teacher Support Team Programme.

The analysis of the data reveals that there is a need for collaborative groups such as the Teacher Support Team. These groups, through cooperation towards a common goal, support, encourage and help improve their technical expertise. While educators agree that the support group is needed and has a positive impact on educators, certain shortcomings have been identified. Some of these include the lack of adequate training for educators and a lack of a coordinated approach by government departments. It is recommended that more consultation and collaboration with government departments be implemented. This would provide an opportunity to try to resolve the shortcomings of the greatly needed support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
CHAPTER 1	1
CONTEXTUAL INTRODUCTION	1
1. Research context	1
1.1 The development of an inclusive education and training system	1
1.2 Definition of terms	3
1.3 Background information	4
1.4 Research setting	5
1.5 The rationale for the research	6
1.6 Problem statement	6
1.7 Research questions	7
1.8 Research objectives	7

1.9 Delimitation of the research	8
1.10 The Methodology	8
1.11 Beneficiaries of the research	9
1.12 Overview of the research report	10
CHAPTER 2	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Legislation	12
2.3 Inclusive education	13
2.4 The need for support services	15
2.5 Educational support personnel	16
2.6 Regional level support teams	17
2.7 Teacher Support Teams	18
2.7.1 The TST forum	19
2.7.2 The structure of the TST	20
2.7.2.1 The TST coordinator	20

2.7.2.2. The educators	21
2.7.2.3 TST meetings	22
2.7.2.4 The school management team	22
2.8 Connecting through collaboration and consultation	23
2.9 Benefits of TSTs	25
2.10 Conclusion	27
CHAPTER 3	28
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	28
3.1 Methodology	28
3.2 The case study approach	28
3.3 Setting	29
3.4 Research design	30
3.5 Data collection methods	32
3.5.1 Observations	33
3.5.2 Interviews	33
3.5.3 Questionnaires	34

3.5.4 Documentation	35
3.6 Data analysis	35
3.7 Research ethics	36
3.8 Conclusion	37
CHAPTER 4	38
RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS	38
4.1 Analysis of questionnaires	38
4.1.1 Analysis of the questions dealing with conceptualisation of the TST	39
4.1.2 Analysis of the questions dealing with the design and purpose of the TST programme	41
4.1.3 Analysis of the questions dealing with implementation of the TST programme	43
4.1.4 Analysis of the questions which dealt with the impact of the TST programme on educators	44
4.2 The analysis of the data collected from the educator interviews	45
4.2.1 Interview with the TST Coordinator	45
4.2.1.1 The need for support	46
4.2.1.2 Structure and role of the TST	46

4.2.1.3 Impact of the TST	48
4.2.1.4 Training and development of TST members	49
4.2.1.5 Cooperation from WCED	49
4.2.1.6 The need for further support	49
4.2.2 Interview with the Deputy Principal	50
4.2.2.1 The need for support	50
4.2.2.2 Structure and role of the TST	51
4.2.2.3 Impact of the TST	52
4.2.2.4 Educators' training and development as TST members	52
4.2.2.5 Cooperation from WCED	53
4.2.2.6 The need for further support	53
4.2.3 Interviews with the educators	53
4.2.3.1 The need for support	54
4.2.3.2 The structure and role of the TST	56
4.2.3.3 Impact of the TST	57
4.2.3.4 Educator's training and development as TST members	59

4.2.3.5 Cooperation from WCED	60
4.2.3.6 The need for further support	61
4.2.4 Interview with the Psychologist	62
4.2.4.1 The need for support	62
4.2.4.2 Structure and role of the TST	64
4.2.4.3 Impact of the TST	65
4.2.4.4 Educator training and development as TST Members	66
4.2.4.5 Cooperation from WCED	67
4.2.4.6 The need for further support	68
4.3 To Conclude	69
CHAPTER 5	70
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	70
5. Introduction	70
5.1 The research objectives revisited	70
5.2 Summary of the findings	71
5.2.1 The conceptualisation and design of the TST programme	71

5.2.2 The design of the TST programme	72
5.2.3 Implementation of the TST programme	73
5.2.4 The impact of the TST programme	74
5.3 Suggestions and Recommendations	74
5.3.1 The TST forum	75
5.3.2 The TST coordinator	76
5.3.3 The TST educator	76
5.3.4 The school	77
5.3.5 The school management team	78
5.3.6 Support services	78
5.4 Conclusion	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY	81
APPENDICES	
Appendix A - Request for permission from WCED to conduct research in school	86
Appendix B - Letter of consent from WCED	87
Appendix C - Consent form for research participants	88
Appendix D - Interview guide	89

Appendix E - Questionnaire	90
Appendix F - Response table	91
Appendix G - Case referral form from educator to TST	92
Appendix H - Teacher support team minutes – new case	93
Appendix I - Teacher support team minutes – new case details cont.	94
Appendix J - Teacher support team minutes – ongoing case details	95
Appendix K - How the process works from start to finish	96

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Responses to the questions on conceptualisation	39
Figure 4.2: Responses to the questions on design and purpose	40
Figure 4.3: Responses to the questions on implementation	42
Figure 4.4: Responses to the questions on impact	44

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

1. Research context

1.1 The development of an inclusive education and training system

All South Africans have a fundamental right to basic education; this is entrenched in Section 29 (1) of the South African Constitution (1996). To include all learners, in particular those who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development, the Minister of Education appointed the National Committee on Special Needs in Education and Training, and the National Committee on Educational Support Services in October 1996. These committees were to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education and training in South Africa, all of which were critical to an inclusive education and training system.

The findings of the National Committee on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Educational Support Services were presented to the Minister of Education in November 1997, and the final report for public comment was published by the Department of Education in February 1998 (NCSNET, 1997; 1998). The Ministry

then released a Consultative Paper on an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 1999).

The report of the National Committee on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Educational Support Services recommended that the education and training system should promote education for all to enable all learners to participate in the education process as equal members of society. To achieve equal education for all, the principles and values as contained in the Constitution and White Papers on Education and Training would need to be agreed upon by all stakeholders. In so doing, all learners should have equal access to a single inclusive education system where participation in a social integration education system is practised.

The South African Government, determined to create special education needs as an integrated component of its education system, acknowledged the reservations educators, parents and higher education had about the challenges that would be associated with special schools and inclusive education within general education and training. The *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001) outlines the framework of an inclusive education and training system and stipulates how it has to accommodate the full range of learning needs to achieve the objectives of providing basic education to all learners within the educational system. The process requires departmental, institutional, instructional and curriculum transformation.

To help learners, who have special education needs, overcome barriers which prevent them from meeting the full range of learning needs, educators work in collaborative

teams called Teacher Support Teams (TST). A TST provides educational support and consultative assistance to educators. The TST is also an indirect mechanism for supporting learners through the support educators receive from one another.

1.2 Definition of terms

❖ Co-education

Co-education is the education of pupils of both sexes at the same institution within the same classroom.

❖ Collaboration

Collaboration, refers to working together and is regarded by Hargreaves and Dawe (1989), as an instrument which empowers educators and enhances professionalism among colleagues who share their expertise and generate critical reflection on what they do as a basis for wiser and more skilled action.

❖ EMDC

Education Management Development Centre. This is the district offices of the different provincial education departments in different provinces. In this instance the EMDCs referred to those of the Western Cape Education Department.

❖ **Inclusion**

Inclusion is a process that develops ways of increasing the participation and learning of all pupils and minimises barriers to their learning and participation (Cheminais, 2000).

Inclusion occurs when a student with special learning or behavioural needs is educated full-time in a general education programme (Idol, 1997).

❖ **SEN (Special Educational Needs)**

A pupil who has a learning difficulty greater than the majority of children who are the same age, and who has difficulty using the educational facilities generally provided, has special education needs. Cheminais (2000) refers to pupils who are intellectually or physically challenged as Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN).

1.3 Background information

The TST (Teacher Support Team) as defined by Creese, Daniels and Norwich (1997), provides support and assistance to educators who deal with a range of learning and behavioural problems encountered by pupils or groups of pupils. It is therefore a school-based, problem-solving forum which aims to support pupils indirectly through educator collaboration and consultation.

The need for TSTs arises owing to changes in the organisation of schooling. Previously there were special classes in ordinary public schools (mainstream) for pupils with learning disabilities. These classes were separate classes set aside for pupils who had learning disabilities. One educator would be responsible to address the various needs of these pupils. A specially trained remedial educator, who could assist these pupils at their various stages of development, would attend to them for the full duration of the school day. Pupils with learning disabilities would have individual attention as the educator would be a specialist in remedial education. Due to financial constraints, education went through certain changes. The most recent change in South Africa has been inclusive education for all pupils within the mainstream education programme (DoE, 2001). The teaching of more children with SEN in ordinary schools and recognition of whole-school approaches to SEN, place a bigger burden on the educators as they will have to implement new approaches to education. Most of the educators would neither have formal or informal training in handling learners who have learning disabilities.

1.4 Research setting

The research was conducted at a co-educational primary school which is situated approximately 20km from Cape Town, on the Cape Flats. The school has a pupil complement of 890 pupils, who are catered for by 30 educators. At this school the age of learners range from 6 to 13 years. This school also has classes R-7 and have 3 classes per grade. The average class consists of 40 learners per class. The learners who attend the school are from the surrounding area and a small percentage of learners travel to school from other areas. This school has also provided inclusive education for the past 7 years.

1.5 Rationale for the research

The rationale for this research is to investigate the implementation of a TST programme as implemented in a primary school in the Western Cape and to evaluate the conceptualisation, design and implementation of the TST programme.

The intention of establishing a school based teacher support team was to provide support for the educator who had to become familiar with special educational needs. At the teacher support team forum, educators share knowledge and skills with each other. Through collaboration and consultation, educators support each other and indirectly support the pupil with SEN. The support which educators receive provides an opportunity for educators to learn specific methods and have access to different teaching materials.

I have decided to research the TST Programme as implemented in a primary school in the Western Cape, as it is my opinion that the TST is a much needed forum and forms a critical part of a school which seeks to constantly improve and support educators and learners. I was not sure whether educators were dealing effectively with the situation in the light of inadequate formal training, I therefore employed an evaluation research approach.

1.6 Problem statement

This study focuses on a Teacher Support Team (TST) programme, to improve its effectiveness, using a formative evaluation approach at a primary school in the Western

Cape. The purpose is to establish what type of support the educators receive to assist them in their function as educators who provide inclusive education to learners with special education needs. Support for educators has a direct impact on the learning environment. This study proposes to investigate to what extent educational support and consultative assistance is provided to educators.

1.7 Research questions

The primary question for this study is: What are the educators' perception of the TST programme? In order to answer the above question, the study asks the following sub-questions.

- ❖ What are the educator's perceptions of the conceptualisation of the TST programme?
- ❖ What are the educator's perceptions of the design of the TST programme?
- ❖ How has a TST programme been implemented at their school?
- ❖ How has a TST programme impacted the educators?
- ❖ What are the benefits of educator collaboration for educators?

1.8 Research objectives

The research objectives for this evaluation research are:

- ❖ To evaluate the conceptualisation of the TST programme.
- ❖ To evaluate the design of the TST programme.

- ❖ To evaluate the implementation of the TST programme.
- ❖ To evaluate the impact of the TST programme on the educators.
- ❖ To recommend improvements to the TST programme.

1.9 Delimitation of the research

This research was conducted at one primary school and included all of the TST educators who teach in various grades within the school. The research took place in the third quarter of the academic school year. The findings only pertain to that particular school, and only reflect the TST programme as implemented by the educators at that one school, on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape.

1.10 The Methodology

While predominantly qualitative methods were utilised in this investigation, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. I decided to employ a mixed method approach as the data could be triangulation for validation for different perspectives.

Qualitative methodology focuses on understanding rather than explaining social actions and events within it's particular context; enables the researcher to adequately explore the phenomenon in the natural setting; emphasises the process rather than outcome and allows for insight into new initiatives.

To gather information for this study, individual interviews were conducted with each TST educator, the deputy principal, the psychologist and the TST coordinator. Documentation related to the programme was examined to gain a better understanding of the TST programme. A questionnaire was also completed by all the interviewees. The questionnaire was designed to determine the educators' perception of the conceptualisation, design, implementation and the impact of the TST programme.

1.11 Beneficiaries of the research

The research may be helpful to educators, parents and pupils who may benefit from the recommendations of this study. The WCED and other provincial education departments may also benefit by this study as it highlights the plight of educators and the need for further support for the TST.

❖ Teacher Support Team

The research aims to assist educators with information and some guidelines for improving the function of a Teacher Support Team programme.

❖ Educators

Educators who share their knowledge and skills with one another, will no longer work in isolation but pass on expertise to benefit both fellow educators and their pupils. The advantages of working collaboratively will be passed on to the learners.

❖ **The school community**

The school community will benefit as educators may become more confident and efficient by improving their knowledge, skills and service delivery. Parents would be made aware of the positive impact that the programme has for pupils who are part of the Teacher Support Team programme. Pupils would benefit from an improved programme.

1.12 Overview of the research report

The research has been structured into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the background to the study by giving an overview of the context in which the research has been conducted. Chapter 1 also highlights the rationale for, background to and objectives of the research study. In Chapter 2, the relevant literature that was consulted for this research is reviewed to give insight into the structure and role of the TST. Chapter 3 deals with the methods used in the data collection process, and how the data was analysed. The results of the data collected and analysed are discussed and represented in Chapter 4. This section gives details of the analysed contents of the questionnaires as well as of the transcribed interviews. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research findings and makes some recommendations that may lead to the improvement of the TST programme. The remaining section provides references and appendices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Schools interpret the establishing and structure of a Teacher Support Team (TST) differently. The TST has basic guidelines but the structure is dependent on the basic needs of the particular school. The literature review will examine the TST in the context of a primary school in the Western Cape.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information on the concept of a TST in one primary school. This chapter outlines the need for consultation within the TST forum, and is based on the view that education is a social process in which collaboration and consultation play a vital role for effective education to take place. Educational philosophy should therefore not be considered outside or apart from the logistics in which the educational process is implemented. When we study the phenomenon of education, it should be evaluated in the context of the intended outcome, viz., educators imparting skills and knowledge to enable learners to develop their potential. The most important component of an effective educational process would therefore be a motivated educator. Hanks (1990) feels that educators are in a unique position where they can provide learning experiences which will assist them to cope better with difficulties. Effective teacher support structures that intend to support teachers should help to achieve the educational goal, not limit or restrict

the educational process. Although schools cannot be expected to attend to all the learner's needs, the educational mission of schools can only be achieved if the problems of learners are attended to (Green & Kreuter, 1991).

2.2 Legislation

Legislation, as documented in South Africa's Constitution (South Africa, 1996) established South Africa's democratic state. The values stated in the Constitution encourage the people of South Africa to strive to build a humane, caring society for all South Africans and in so doing improve the quality of life for all South African citizens by freeing the potential of each person in South Africa (South Africa, 1996).

The right of citizens to an effective education system is expounded in the South African Constitution in Chapter 9 (2), which commits the state to the achievement of equality for all its citizens without fear, favour or prejudice. Chapter 9 (3), (4) and (5) commit the state to non-discrimination which serves to protect all, whether disabled or not (South Africa, 1996). The response of the *Education White Paper 1* on education and training (DoE, 1995) to this call, was to outline the need for the provision of adequate opportunities for learners with Special Education Needs (SEN) to be included in mainstream education. In our new democratic state it is the right of any pupil to be taught within the mainstream and not be discriminated against. If society is to recognise that we are all different, then there needs to be a complete acceptance of all people, especially those with SEN. We are all unique individuals with our own unique talents and

limitation. People have abilities, disabilities, strengths and weaknesses all people should have equal access to education.

In October 1996, the appointment of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services was initiated by the Minister of Education. These committees were to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education and training in South Africa. Their joint reports on their findings were presented to the Minister of Education in November 1997, and the final report was published in February 1998. The joint report recommended that the education and training system promote education for all and develop inclusive and supportive centres of learning for all learners to participate in the educational process, extend their potential and participate as equal members of society (NCSNET, 1997).

2.3 Inclusive education

In the *Education White Paper 6*, (DoE, 2001), the Minister admits to the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education and expounds on the findings of the consultative paper:

I'm also deeply aware of the anxieties that many educators, lecturers, parents and learners hold about our inclusive proposal for learners with special education needs. They fear the many challenges that may come with inclusion - of teaching, communication, cost, stereotyping and the safety of learners - that can be righted only by further professional and physical resources development, information, dissemination and advocacy (DoE, 2001:3).

Special education needs may arise from factors such as physical, mental, sensory or neurological impairments, psychosocial disturbances, differences in intellectual ability and socio-economic deprivation. Many learners who experience barriers to learning and development may drop out of learning centres or schools. The dropout may be due to the inability of the education system to accommodate their learning needs (DoE, 2001).

In establishing an education and training system for South Africa that honours equality for all, it is the Department of Education and educator's responsibility to include learners with disabilities. A broad range of learning needs exists among learners at any point in time. If the learning needs are not met, learners may fail to learn or even be excluded from the learning system. In a futures study undertaken by Putnam, Spiegel and Bruininks (1995), noted that there are indicators that after the year 2000, increased movement towards inclusion will occur in educational institutions. All children have a right to free and equal, non-racial, non-sexist and compulsory education within one department, as education is a right and not a privilege (*Children's Charter of South Africa*, 1992: Article 8). The right of people who have disabilities or special learning and/or behavioural needs, to be included in general educational classrooms, will become commonplace.

With the assistance of the TST, the aim was to obtain more efficient and effective delivery of assistance to pupils with SEN by placing the initiative for action in the hands of classroom educators. The reduction of education staff, larger classes and inadequate training for educators has not helped to achieve this aim. According to Chalfant *et al* (1979), the educator assistance teams are to compliment both special and general

education programmes, not to replace special education services. The effectiveness of these TST teams were found to be dependant upon support, training and networking (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989). Inadequate support results in TSTs still being ineffective at this stage. To provide the support necessary to assist learners who have SEN, teams of professionals and parents create programmes that offer support for learners and educators.

2.4 The need for support services

With the introduction of inclusive education the need for support for teaching staff increases. This is highlighted by Kaiser & Woodman (1985) who found that educators do not have sufficient training or support from both internal and external support structures and organisational barriers (Pfeiffer & Tittler, 1983) also contributed to this problem. Educators are confronted with many challenges associated with SEN, and they often lack confidence to adequately implement programmes to meet the needs of the SEN pupil. The feeling of isolation, when trying to meet a wide range of needs, often leads to frustration and stress among the educators.

With the introduction of inclusive education (DoE, 2001), class sizes have increased substantially. The need for peer support to help educators solve problems that may arise in their classrooms or the school is therefore highlighted by educators who teach pupils with special education needs. The TST provides educators with an opportunity to air, discuss, express and share their frustrations with other educators who have similar problems. This provides an opportunity to share their knowledge, skills and different

methods of approaching certain problems when dealing with the SEN pupil within the mainstream classroom.

Networking provides a forum for educators to share ideas that could assist them to tolerate the pressures which they encounter within the educational system. In doing this, they realise that they are not alone and that other educators usually have similar difficulties.

2.5 Education support personnel

An effort by the South African government to move away from excluding certain groups of learners (DoE, 2001) from mainstream classes has led to an inclusive education system within the mainstream. The development of whole-school approaches to include learners with SEN, has led to the need to establish and develop TSTs in schools. The establishment of teacher support teams within general education and training has meant that more emphasis is placed on the individual educator (Solity & Bickler, 1994) to deal with, cope with, and resolve problems of learners who have learning or behavioural problems. The educator will have some assistance from outside support services (Andrews, 1989), such as LSEN facilitators and/or school psychologist who serve as consultants to the educators. The spectrum of consultees could be expanded to include parents, educators, counsellors, social / health workers and other relevant community role players.

2.6 Regional level support teams

Sharing problems with other educators is important, as making judgements about the emotional wellbeing of pupils might not be straightforward. Regional support from the Education Management Development Centre (EMDC) offers the opportunity to share concerns with other educational staff at TST meetings, and helps to enable educators to identify problems and take positive action (Gous & Mfazwe, 1998). This interaction could also help advise staff of the need to obtain outside intervention when handling a difficult situation before it becomes a crisis (Young Minds, 1996).

With the inclusion of SEN learners within the mainstream of education, the need to establish and develop institutional-level support teams at educational institutions to help educators cope with the diverse range of learning needs became apparent.

General and further education and training institutions are establishing institutional-level support teams. These teams will, through evaluating the needs of the school, serve to support teaching and help build the capacity of schools. The function of these teams is to provide coordinated learner and educator support services (Brümmer, 1998) to adequately support the learning and teaching process. This they do by identifying and addressing learner, educator and educational institutional needs.

These support teams may comprise of various levels of stakeholders, e.g.:

- Staff from provincial departments, e.g., Western Cape Education Department (WCED).
- Staff from special needs school, e.g., clinics.

- Institutional level support teams, e.g., schools and colleges

(Creese, Daniels & Norwich, 1997; Cheminais, 2000; DoE , 2001).

Departmental support teams will, through evaluating the needs of the institution, provide a full range of education support services such as social workers, psychologists, school clinics and child welfare societies.

In the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001), it is stated that the Department of Education will revise the norms and standards for teacher education to include the development of competencies to recognise and address barriers to learning. It also proposes to accommodate the diverse range of learning needs of learners who have SEN to develop the professional capacity of all educators to be able to address these needs.

The *Education White Paper 6*, (DoE, 2001) further states that for the inclusive model to work, school-based support for all educators at all schools needs to be created for development and coordination for such support to be successful.

2.7 Teacher Support Teams

Teacher Support Teams are examples of school-based structures that facilitate the provision of education support services. The TST, at this school, consists of one educator from each grade, one coordinator and one member of the school management team who serves on the TST forum.

The TST consists of educators who, through collaboration and consultation, develop their own response to their own particular needs and build their own version (see Appendix K) of a TST for educator support at the individual schools. Educators involved in a TST have a common forum in which they share their experience and knowledge with other educators from the same or neighbouring schools. During group discussions, educators share and compare ideas, knowledge and skills.

2.7.1 The TST forum

A TST forum is a school-based forum which supports educators. It needs to be designed to fit the needs of the school as a whole. Educators share knowledge and skills for the enhancement of education (Creese *et al.*, 1997).

Through the support and assistance of one another, educators make provision to support the pupil with special education needs. This support helps the educator overcome behavioural difficulties which they may face in the classroom. Individual educators request support, on a voluntary basis, from the TST. Through collaboration and exchange of ideas, the TST, together with the referring educator, tries to solve the problem (Creese *et al.*, 1997).

The TST is designed and adapted to serve the needs of that particular school and its learners. Some TSTs have expanded their services from only curative services to preventative services. Other TSTs have remained as a curative service to learners with learning difficulties.

TSTs vary widely from school to school in their composition and the way they function. Many different support structures have been instituted to support educators through group problem solving, sharing information and collaboration. These groups, although sharing the same foundation, are called by various names, e.g., TATs (Teacher Assistance Teams) (Craig *et al.*, 2000), SSTs (School Support Teams), (Joseph, Johnson & Ginsberg, 1996), PSG (Peer Support Groups) and ISTs (Instructional Support Teams) (College of William & Mary. Training and Technical Assistance Center, 2002).

Educators therefore need to organise themselves into consultative, collaborative support teams to be able to effectively deal with the challenges they will face while trying to cope with an inclusive educational system. These teams will serve to provide consultation among all staff to help manage difficult learners and learners with disabilities.

This system of consultation and collaboration provides support, both for the educator and the pupil. In so doing, educators can support learners from an informed position as input from different educators can be gathered. This in turn leads to a more holistic approach when trying to understand the learner's needs.

2.7.2 The structure of the TST

2.7.2.1 The TST coordinator

Each TST should select a TST coordinator. The remedial teacher will normally be a good choice for this position, as he/she forms the core of the school-based support team.

The remedial educator will have specialised training or experience of learners with special education needs (Brümmer, 1998) which can provide support for the educator in dealing with specific problems.

The role of the coordinator is to engage educators in positive collaboration and consultation. The coordinator stimulates the discussions by questioning, explaining or asking for clarity on the points mentioned in the meeting. The coordinator also summarises the points discussed by the educators.

2.7.2.2 The educators

It would be ideal for the entire staff to participate on the TST forum, but logistics around the management of a school do not always make this possible. A core group of educators therefore represents the rest of the educators at this forum. They are expected to report to the relevant educators who have approached the TST for support. The motivated educators, who are the heartbeat of education, form an integral part in the success of a TST programme. These educators serve as a core team to support their peers by sharing knowledge and understanding, and in so doing help to develop one another professionally. The forum serves to provide an opportunity for educators to share, manage and solve problems which may arise within the classroom, and which are of concern to the educator.

2.7.2.3 TST meetings

Ideally the TST could meet once a week. Regular meetings give educators who are seeking support enough time to approach the TST forum with their request for support, yet allow for almost immediate response (see Appendix I). These meetings would either be held during an interval or after school. The request with the relevant information regarding the pupil would be given to a team member before a TST meeting. This request would then be tabled at a TST forum. At each meeting the forum usually deals with one case per meeting, either a follow-up (see Appendix J) of a previous request or a new request for support is tabled. This request is handed in on a case referral form (see Appendix G). The TST team is expected to keep confidential minutes (see Appendix H) of all cases to enable follow-up work and to report back to the educator who submitted a request for support from the TST forum. These minutes are also presented to the school psychologist on request.

2.7.2.4 The school management team

It is not a prerequisite for the principal of the school to be part of the TST forum, but the support of management is needed. Usually one member of the school management team will also be represented on the TST forum. The principal could improve the effectiveness of the TST. For successful schooling to occur, the acceptance of responsibility by leadership and the ability of leadership to allocate resources and training which contribute positively to the running of the TST.

2.8 Connecting through collaboration and consultation

The shift away from a curative to a preventative approach of dealing with learners who have SEN has put the onus on educators who teach in general education classrooms to acquire knowledge and skills (Phillips & McCullough, 1990) to be able to handle learners who have learning disabilities. Educators who were not equipped (Goodlad, 1984) to deal with the new demands placed on them by the WCED, were forced to establish teams in which they could collaborate and share their knowledge and skills; this enabled them to better assist one another to overcome certain problems which the learners might have.

As inclusion becomes part of the educational process in South Africa (Gous & Mfazwe, 1998), and South Africa moves towards a free and equal, non-racial, non-sexist and compulsory education for all children (*Children's Charter of South Africa*, 1992), educators are faced with the challenge of improving their skills to accommodate children with disabilities into general education classrooms.

Programmes which will promote the inclusion of learners with disabilities into general education classrooms should therefore be structured as a collaborative partnership amongst all professional staff (Hudson, *et al* 1987; Pugach & Johnson, 1995). As teaching is inherently difficult, most educators recognise that they sometimes need help. Teams that collaborate, develop structures for planning, problem-solving and team building towards a common goal. The benefit therefore of educator collaboration is to build confidence within a supportive group structure. Rosenholtz (1989) found that when educators talked with one another in collaborative settings, they usually shared

instructionally related ideas and materials. When educators shared information about a particular learner, it would be for the purpose of finding ways to help the learner learn more effectively.

All educators need to develop skills and knowledge specific to their particular need. Educators need effective education, skills and collaboration strategies that will enable them to work with other professionals towards problem-solving solutions. Goodlad (1984) reported that teacher education institutions had largely ignored the need to prepare educators to work collaboratively with one another. If educators are to be full and equal collaborators with other professionals, educator programmes must prepare all future educators for their roles as collaborators (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). Rosenholtz (1989) found that educators who felt that they continued to learn about their profession throughout their careers, experienced the following:

- ❖ Schools had set clearly defined goals for educator improvement.
- ❖ Principals use educator evaluation as tools to help educators improve their skills.
- ❖ Collaboration between principal and educators was the norm.

Ashton and Webb (1986) found that the main benefit of the educator as collaborator is that it reduces the educator's sense of powerlessness and increases the educator's sense of efficiency.

Educators in collaborative schools seek to find more ideas from their colleagues, professional staff and even workshops. When they are faced with a learning problem,

they are more likely to seek and receive advice and assistance from other educators or their principal. Little (1990) observes that the strongest form of collaboration is joint work because it involves encounters among teachers that rest on shared responsibility for the work of teaching. This forces educators away from making isolated decisions towards making collective decisions. It brings colleagues and their expertise together where they can reflect critically upon intended actions that could be taken to resolve a particular problem.

This would suggest that school-based support teams need good working relations with one another as well as skills to work effectively with others in their educational institutions. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) also concur that collaboration is essential for the success of schools.

2.9 Benefits of TSTs

Educators working in teams can accomplish more than individuals working in isolation. Empowering the educator with new skills and educational support together with consultative assistance can serve to achieve better results in education (Creese, *et al.*, 1997).

Fullan and Hargreaves, (1992) state that the professional isolation of teachers limits access to new ideas and better solutions, drives stress inwards to fester and accumulate, fails to recognise and praise success, and permits incompetence to exist and persist to the detriment of pupils, colleagues and teachers themselves. In contrast to this, the TST

therefore serves as a collaborative forum where educators can support one another and share their expertise (Creese, *et al.*, 1997). The forum therefore serves partially as a sounding board for ideas but also as a brainstorming exercise in problem solving. Such positive and productive collaboration helps the pupils indirectly as they become the beneficiaries of knowledge acquired by educators who have had positive consultation with other educators.

The benefits of TSTs could be summarised as follows:

- Educators share their knowledge and skills with one another, and in doing so they empower one another with knowledge and skills.
- Educators support and encourage one another when faced with difficult problems, therefore promoting positive attitudes towards change.
- Staff development takes place through educators serving as mentors to one another.
- Interaction amongst educators and support staff promotes professionalism.
- Educators are empowered through collaboration and consultation with one another and support staff.
- Indirect service delivery takes place where educators support one another and indirectly assist the learners to overcome their problems.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the importance of consultation and collaboration among the various role players connected to the TST at various levels was contextualised. In Chapter 3, the method used to collect the data from various stakeholders at the school will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

A qualitative approach was used as summarised by Babbie and Mouton (2001); they explain that the purpose of evaluation research is to make judgement-orientated evaluations, improvement-orientated evaluations and knowledge-orientated evaluations.

The emphasis in qualitative methodology is on process, on understanding why certain things occur in a particular way, not only on what is going on (Mostyn, 1987). Marshall and Rossman (1989) contend that qualitative research entails familiarity with the everyday life or setting chosen for study, e.g., values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives; views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants; is descriptive and relies on people's words as the primary data.

3.2 The case study approach

According to Merriam (1988), case studies in education are qualitative and hypothesis-generating rather than quantitative and hypothesis testing. Researchers are interested in

insight, discovery and interpretation. In this chapter the researcher has used a case study, which seeks to answer the following questions:

- ❖ How is a TST programme conducted?
- ❖ How has it improved the educator?
- ❖ Why was there a need for the educator to become part of the TST?
- ❖ Why is the TST important for the educator?
- ❖ How has the TST been of benefit (if any) to the educator?

The TST is constantly evolving and defining itself, which makes the case study method appropriate. The researcher felt that in order to be able to answer these questions, the researcher needed the opinions of educators who were serving on a TST forum to explain what they felt the TST had contributed to their role as an educator. It was also the intention to use this information to ascertain if the TST programme could be improved.

The research takes the form of a case study, as it was the intention of the researcher to establish the concept and functions of a TST as experienced by the educators who have firsthand knowledge of a TST forum. This gave me an opportunity to do an empirical investigation of the implementation of a TST forum, and its practice.

3.3 Setting

This study took place in one primary school, on the Cape Flats, in the Western Cape. Nine primary school educators who represent various grades within the same school were

participants in this research. Seven of these were class educators, one remedial educator (TST coordinator) and one educator was part of the school management team.

This study followed a predominantly qualitative evaluation approach that focused on the educator's perceptions of the TST programme and how it impacts on their professional development as educators. Observations, interviews and documents generated at TST meetings were used as various methods to collect data. The educators' personal opinions of the TST programme and the development that they have experienced because of their participation was the focus of this investigation.

3.4 Research design

This research followed Babbie and Mouton's (2001) logical evaluation model as it concentrated on the conceptualisation, design and implementation of the TST programme. Evaluation research uses scientific methods to measure the implementation and outcomes of a programme in order to make informed decisions about a particular programme (Rutman, 1994) The intention of the researcher was to evaluate the programme, to establish the impact the programme has had on the various educators who are represented on the TST forum.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that there are questions to be answered when using the logical model:

- ❖ Has the programme been implemented as designed?
- ❖ Does the programme serve the target population?

- ❖ Are services delivered as originally intended?
- ❖ Are the necessary programme management administration and infrastructure in place to support implementation? (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The following research stages were followed:

Phase One:

To obtain information which would assist the researcher to become familiar with the conceptualisation and design of the TST programme, an analysis of the programme documents and policies was studied. Various case files were examined to obtain more insight into the approaches used to document cases. It was also the researcher's intention to ascertain the type of advice that was imparted to educators, which they could implement in their classrooms to assist the SEN learners.

Phase Two:

To be able to observe the implementation of the TST programme, the researcher attended various meetings held by the TST. Meetings were recorded on audiotape to acquire more in-depth data. Minutes of meetings were analysed to gain a better understanding of the goals and operation of the TST forum.

The collection of data also included videotaped interviews with various educators and one psychologist. The intention of conducting these interviews was to gather data from

the respondents and their perceptions of the TST programme in relation to the conceptualisation, implementation and design of the TST programme. These respondents were interviewed individually in the privacy of a classroom set aside for these interviews. The researcher also negotiated a time convenient for the respondents.

Informal discussions with the respondents were held to obtain their perception of the TST programme, and also supplement information gathered through the formal interviews.

Phase Three:

To evaluate the impact of the TST programme, the researcher attended meetings and held discussions with the educators, coordinator and psychologist. The researcher also conducted interviews with the respondents and used open-ended type questions as a guide in these interviews. To gain more information from the respondents, the researcher requested that the respondents also complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was then used to compare data that was collected.

3.5 Data collection instruments

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), both quantitative and qualitative methods are often used in evaluation studies. Through the process of collecting data, it was the researcher's intention to collect various kinds of data through a variety of methods and techniques. The main aim was to produce reliable data (Mouton, 1996). Various stakeholders who were associated with the TST programme were involved in the original

interviews and questionnaires. These stakeholders included the deputy principal, the TST coordinator, various grade educators and a psychologist.

Interviews were conducted, documentation was examined and meeting procedure observed. These techniques were chosen to elicit the data needed to gain a better understanding of the problem, contribute different perspectives on the issue and make effective use of the time available to collect the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

3.5.1 Observations

It was the researchers' intention to gather information from participants who were involved in the TST programme by observing the procedures at their meetings. The proceedings were documented and recorded as field notes.

3.5.2 Interviews

The interviews took the form of open-ended, semi-structured questions. The direction of questioning was determined by the response of the interviewees, as the researcher wanted to obtain greater insight into the programme from the educator's point of view. In the semi-structured interview, the questions are specified, but the interviewer was free to probe beyond the answers (Gillham, 2000).

Individual, in-depth, open-ended interviews were used for this study to obtain a rich data source. As it was the intention to be as non-descriptive as possible and to avoid

influencing the participants' responses, an interview guide (Appendix D) was used. Participants were encouraged to expand on their thoughts and probing questions were used to elicit greater depths of responses from the participants. The strengths of the interview method are that it allows for a wide variety of information and a large number of respondents. It involves a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee with the purpose of obtaining valid and reliable information. The strength of interviewing is its adaptability, which allows the interviewer to follow up leads, probe responses and investigate feelings. Some disadvantages are that interviewees may not be willing to share all the information that is required with the interviewer. Another limitation is that it is time-consuming, highly subjective and always poses the danger of bias (Wragg, 1978). When interviews alone are used, distortions in data are more likely, as interviewers may project personal biases.

3.5.3 Questionnaires

A questionnaire (Appendix E) was designed to determine the educators' perceptions of the conceptualisation, design, implementation and impact of the TST programme. The questionnaire was used to determine the educators' objective opinions of the TST programme. Nine educators completed a questionnaire, comprising 14 questions. The data was transferred to a table showing the possible measurement categories (Appendix F). Self-administrated questionnaires were used as they are more effective when dealing with sensitive issues. Respondents are sometimes reluctant to report controversial issues in interviews but are willing to respond to self-administered questionnaires. The

questionnaire was designed to apply the same definitions uniformly to all subjects and to ask exactly the same questions of all the respondents.

3.5.4 Documentation

Relevant sources of information such as programme documents and minutes of meetings were utilised as resource materials in this research. The documentation was studied to get a better understanding of the conceptualisation of the TST programme and to be able to relate the evaluation to the research objectives. These documents were examined in order to evaluate whether the aims and objectives of the programme were being met.

3.6 Data analysis

The interviews with the deputy principal, TST coordinator, educators and the psychologist were recorded on videotape and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Through open coding these transcripts of the interviews were then divided into broad meta-themes of conceptualisation, design, implementation and impact. According to Powney and Watts (1987), analysis is the detailed examination of the database that ensues from single or multiple interviews. Open coding was used to analyse the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), as analysis of the data involves interpretation and is therefore a creative process.

Fourteen questions were expressed in four different bar graphs. The bar graphs are representations of the frequency distribution for the nominal data. The cumulative frequency for each question was determined and the frequency was placed on the

frequency table. A frequency distribution table is a table showing various possible measurement categories together with the number of cases falling into them (Huysamen, 1987). Each questions response was either strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree. Strongly agree and agree were coupled and categorised as “agree”, while the responses marked strongly disagree and disagree were classified as “disagree” for analysis purposes.

Mouton (1996) states that analysis in qualitative research means capturing the research respondents’ own understanding of the topic, therefore ensuring validity of the eventual results.

3.7 Research ethics

Permission to conduct the research had been requested from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). The application to conduct the research was approved by the Western Cape Education Department on 10 June 2003. Permission was requested from educators who participated in my research. All the educators gave their consent for this research study to be conducted. The information gathered was treated as highly confidential and in no way would educators or the school be identified through the final report. A copy of the final research report would be made available to the Research Directorate, WCED.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the methodology employed in the collection of data for this study. It highlighted that a mix method approach was used in a case study of the conceptualisation, design, implementation and impact of a TST programme at a primary school on the Cape Flats. The chapter further explains the rationale for using such an approach and gives information on how the data was analysed. In Chapter 4, the results of the data that was collected and analysed is presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the analysed contents of the transcribed interviews as well as of the questionnaires will be presented. The information that was gathered by means of the questionnaires is presented in graphic form. The data from the questionnaires is grouped under the following headings:

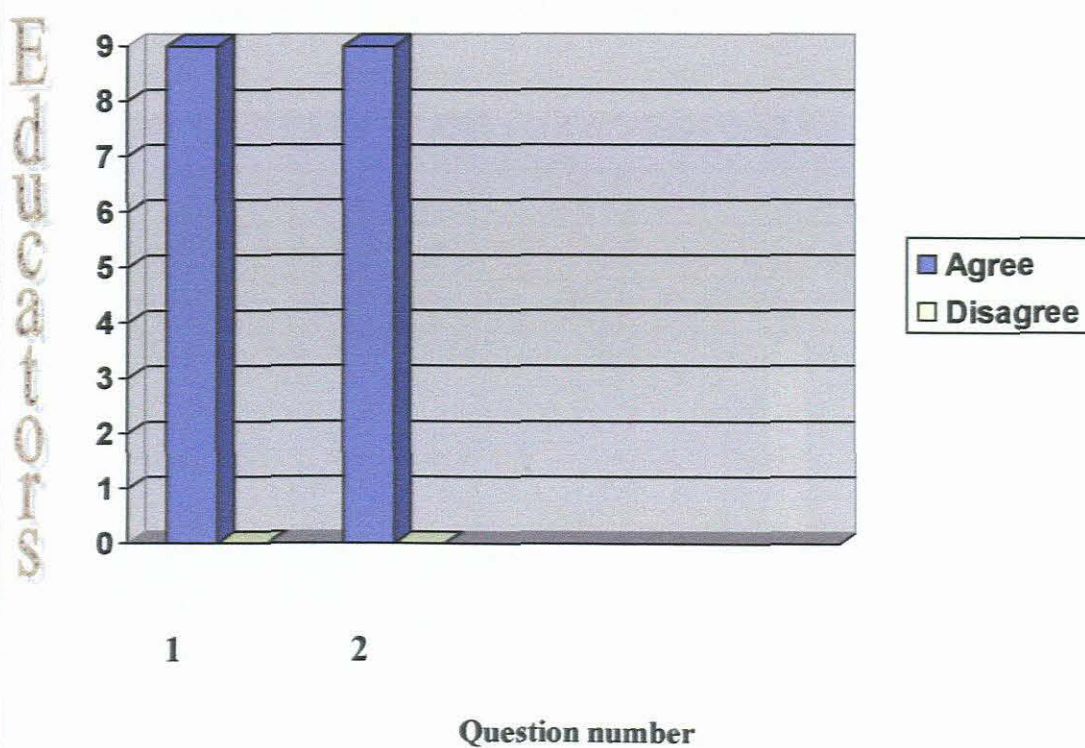
1. Responses to the questions on conceptualisation.
2. Educators' responses to questions on design.
3. Educators' responses to the questions on implementation.
4. Educators' responses to questions on impact.

4.1 Analysis of questionnaires

The questionnaire is represented by three different bar charts. The bar charts are representations of the frequency distribution for the nominal data (Huysamen, 1987). The y-axis is a representation of the educators and the x-axis represents the questions. The response to each question could be: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, or *strongly agree* (see Appendix E). For analysis purpose only the terms "agree" and "disagree" were used as the respondent could either in essence agree or disagree to the question. "Agree" included responses that strongly agreed as well as those who agreed while "disagree"

referred to respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed to statements. The cumulative frequency of each question was determined and the frequency was represented on a frequency table (see Appendix F). The three bar charts represent the answers to the themes of conceptualisation, design and implementation of the TST programme.

Figure 4.1: Responses to the questions on conceptualisation



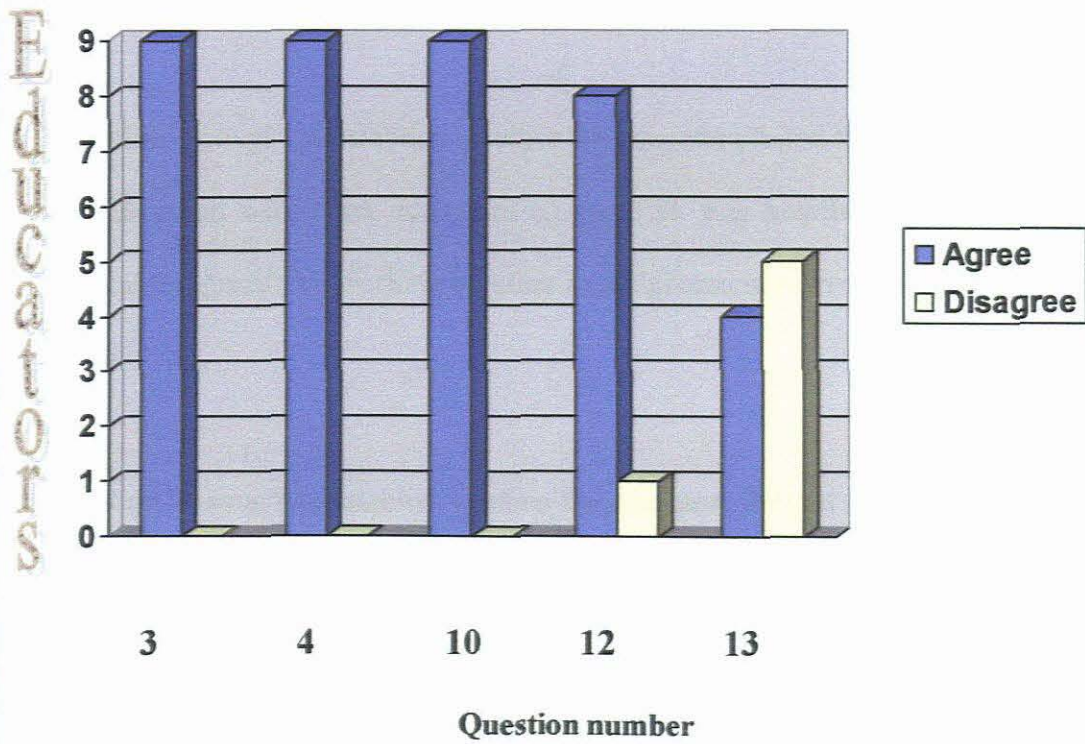
4.1.1 Analysis of the questions dealing with conceptualisation of the TST

These questions attempted to ascertain the educators' perception to the relevance of a TST programme. The questions were interpreted as follows:

a) Question 1 sought to establish whether the educator was an existing member of the TST when the questionnaire was completed. All nine educators agreed that they were part of the TST when they completed the questionnaire.

b) Question 2 sought to establish if the educator felt there was a need for the TST programme. All nine educators agreed that there was a need for the TST programme.

Figure 4.2: Responses to the questions on design and purpose



4.1.2 Analysis of the questions dealing with the design and purpose of the TST programme

These questions examined the educators' understanding of the design of the TST programme. The questions were interpreted as follows:

- a) Question 3 sought to establish whether being part of the TST programme helped the educators to better resolve problems which pupils had. All nine educators agreed that they could better resolve pupils' problems since being part of the TST programme.

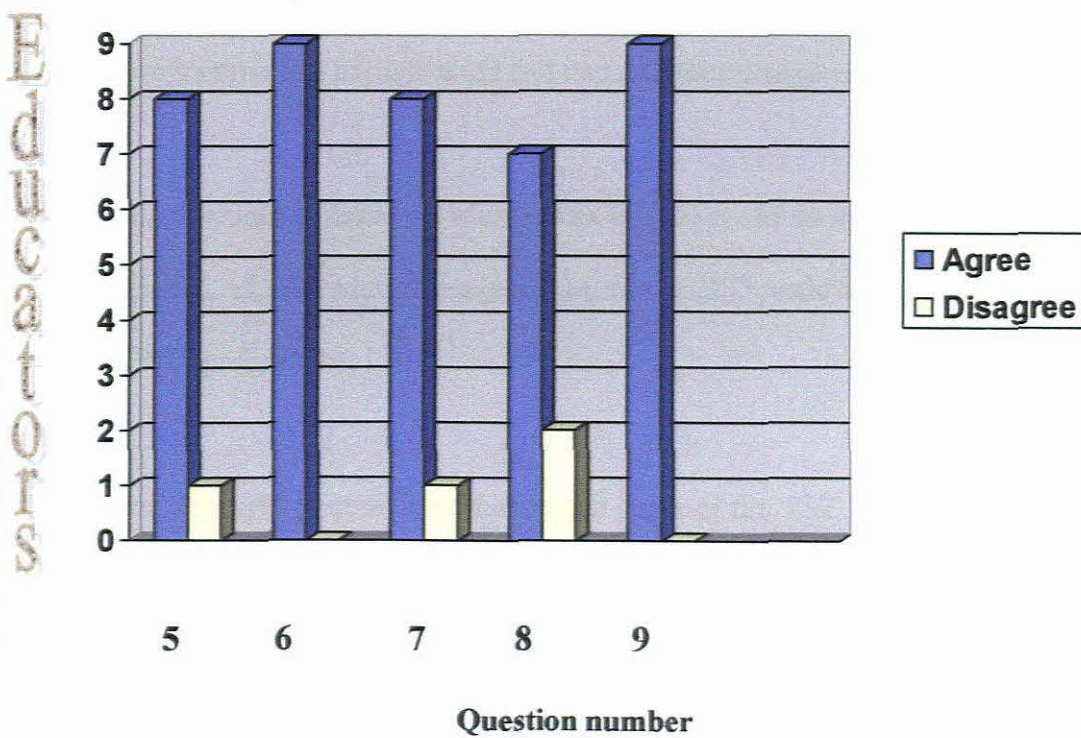
- b) Question 4 sought to establish whether the educators found that working together in collaboration with other educators on the TST was helpful to teaching. All nine educators agreed that working together in collaboration with one another was helpful to teaching.

- c) Question 10 sought to establish whether the educators felt that sharing the problem and ideas with other educators had helped them to resolve their problems more effectively. All nine educators agreed that sharing their problems and ideas with other educators had helped them to resolve their problems more effectively.

- d) Question 12 sought to establish whether the educator had grown as an educator as a direct result of being part of a TST programme. In this question, eight educators indicated that they had grown as an educator as a result of being part of the TST programme and one educator disagreed.

e) Question 13 sought to establish whether the pupils were responding positively to the intentions which were discussed in the TST meetings. When answering this question, four educators indicated that they agreed that the pupils were responding positively to the intentions which were discussed in the TST meetings, and five educators disagreed.

Figure 4.3: Responses to the questions on implementation



4.1.3 Analysis of the questions dealing with the implementation of the TST programme

These questions examined the educators' responses to their understanding of the implementation of the TST programme. The questions were interpreted as follows:

- a) Question 5 sought to establish whether the educators were satisfied with the TST programme as implemented in their school. Eight educators agreed with the way the TST programme was implemented and one educator disagreed.

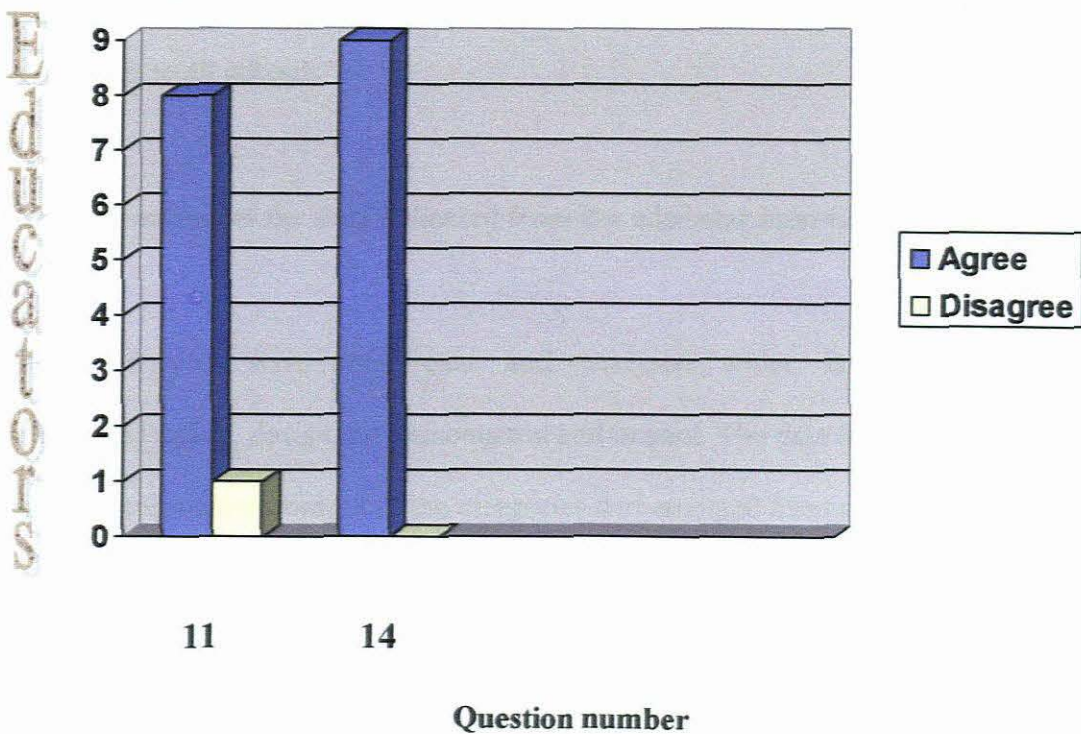
- b) Question 6 sought to establish whether the WCED could do more to support the TST programme. All nine educators agreed that the WCED could do more in their support of the TST programme.

- c) Question 7 sought to establish whether the goals of the TST were being met. Eight educators agreed that the goals of the TST were being met and one educator disagreed.

- d) Question 8 sought to establish whether the TST programme had helped to improve the quality of education at the educator's own school. In response to Question 8, seven educators agreed that the TST programme had helped to improve the quality of education at their school and two educators disagreed.

e) Question 9 sought to establish whether improvements to the TST programme could still be implemented. In response to Question 9, all nine educators agreed that improvements to the TST programme could still be implemented.

Figure 4.4: Responses to the questions on impact



4.1.4 Analysis of the questions which dealt with the impact of the TST programme on educators

These questions examined the educators' understanding of the impact of the TST programme on educators. The questions were interpreted as follows:

a) Question 11 sought to establish whether a TST had been of benefit to the educators. In response to Question 11, eight educators agreed that the TST had been of benefit to them and one educator disagreed.

b) Question 14 sought to establish whether the TST would be an asset to other schools. In response to Question 14, all nine educators agreed that the TST programme would be an asset to all schools.

4.2 The analysis of the data collected from the educator interviews

The interviews were interpreted and analysed under broad meta-themes of conceptualisation, design, implementation and impact. The data from the interviews will now be presented according to the categories that emerged from open coding, supported by excerpts from transcripts from the interviews.

4.2.1 Interview with the TST coordinator

The following categories emerged from the interview with the TST coordinator

1. The need for support.
2. Structure and role of the TST.
3. Impact of the TST.
4. Training of TST members.
5. Cooperation from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).
6. Verifying the need for further support.

The context of this interview will now be presented under the six categories mentioned above, supported by excerpts from the transcripts of the interview.

4.2.1.1 The need for support

Initially the coordinator joined the TST out of interest. The coordinator was a learning support educator at the particular time. The coordinator saw that learners who needed learning support also had “Social or Emotional problems, which as a team we can help to solve”. The Teacher Support Team could thus be instrumental to help solve learning as well as other personal problems of the learners.

4.2.1.2 Structure and role of the TST

The coordinator has been trained “a little bit” by the facilitator of the Athlone Learning Support Centre. The facilitator works in clusters (school clusters) and has shown the coordinator a video of how a TST could possibly function. This video is called Teachers Supporting Teachers and it is the property of the Athlone School Clinic. The rest of the TST had not seen the video, as there was only one video. The coordinator was also unsure whether all the members of the TST had been exposed to how a TST ought to function.

“I’m not sure, but I think that prior to my coming here, there was somebody else helping the teachers to establish the TST”.

The coordinator explained how their school had developed a structure to suit their school's needs.

“At some schools the principal is part of the TST, but at some schools the deputy principal is part of the TST and then we have one teacher per grade as well, and a learning support teacher who coordinates the TST and it's not a hard and fast rule that we have to have one teacher per grade. It's just something which I thought could be desirable because that teacher could then feed back to the grade whatever is happening. The idea is that for each grade we have a contact person. Yes, and that is basically what constitutes the TST.”

The coordinator then further explained that the grade representative has to report back to the other educators in that grade, but that this often does not happen. She states that:

“This is one of the areas that I'm not entirely happy with because I don't think that is taking place.”

A referral form has to be filled in for every pupil who has a problem and is referred to the TST. The grade representative then submits the referral to the TST.

“The teacher who has the problem with the difficulty with the child then is invited to a meeting of the TST. The whole panel, which constitutes the TST plus the teacher, now states the problem in front of the whole panel and together we should brainstorm solutions to the problem and then the teacher is supposed to go

back with a strategy suggested and implement it and come back at a later prearranged stage, say after three weeks, and report back as to how, whether the suggested recommendations are carried out and whether she has any success with it or not. If it hasn't been successful we then have to look at other options, maybe calling parents in to a meeting, getting the principal involved or the governing body, depending on the level of the problem.”

4.2.1.3 Impact of the TST

The coordinator believes that time constraints have an impact on the way educators react to the different TST sessions and often the sessions turn out to be “another moan session” about the pupils’ behaviour. The coordinator believes that most cases have behavioural problems, and therefore the parents need to be involved “so most times it is the parents you need to get involved”.

The coordinator further contends that there is not sufficient input from the educators as they feel that they “lack the skills to suggest ways to deal with the problem”. The educators may also have decided what to do about the pupil and only seek the approval or support of the TST. There is also not sufficient cohesion or working together: “I just feel that there is something lacking, but I don’t know what it is.”

4.2.1.4 Training and development of TST members

The coordinator states that she has developed as she has sourced a database for referrals and contacts. She has also developed the skills which are necessary in her portfolio as coordinator: “I’ve actually developed more or less a skill of my own out of necessity.”

She also states that the whole team needs to develop further.

4.2.1.5 Cooperation from WCED

The coordinator believes that the WCED is not doing enough to support the TST, and emphatically states:

“No, I don’t. Definitely not. Other than our learning support facilitator who is prepared to come along if we do have any problems, we don’t get much support.”

4.2.1.6 The need for further support

There is a dire need for additional support, according to the coordinator. She thinks that the parents need to be proactive by becoming part of the TST. This would help the parent to see the inadequate help received from the department, and also to experience the plight of the educator.

“The learners come to school lacking social skills, lacking the necessary intellectual skills, lacking in many areas and we have very little support. When the parents themselves start seeing that, well, educators can only go this far, they will then realise that we not are really getting any, much help from the education department and I feel that it’s the parent’s responsibility what happens to their child at the end of the day.”

4.2.2 Interview with the deputy principal

Through the use of open-coding, the same categories were identified as in the first interview. The content of this interview will now be presented under the six categories supported by excerpts from the transcript of the interview.

4.2.2.1 The need for support

The deputy principal professes that he needs help because he works with both staff and pupils at the school to solve problems at all levels.

“So I find myself more and more involved with mediation, with solving problems on all the levels at the school, and in order for me to be able to work optimally at my job description, I need help and the help that I get I get from the TST team, because there are educators representing all different grades.”

4.2.2.2 Structure and role of the TST

The deputy principal explained the TST structure and role as represented at his school.

“Well, the structure is representative of the different grades at the school. There is one teacher to represent a certain grade and to serve on the TST body. So we have teachers representing grades 1, 2 and 3 right up to grade 7 and right up top is Mrs xxxx who facilitates all the meetings, who does the referrals, who makes the phone calls. Basically we meet once a week and all problem areas, problem children, are discussed. Those who have academic problems, those who have special problems even medical problems, we discuss it at the meeting so that we can jointly decide on the next step”.

The role played by the TST includes the discussions of problems but also looks at how to assist learners. Interventions may include parent interviews or referral of the learner to a psychologist.

“Either interviews with the parents referring the child to other schools where the child would be better placed, even special education or referring the child to a psychologist or family centre where there are special problems involving parents, divorce, separations and deaths and so on.”

4.2.2.3 Impact of the TST

The deputy principal claims that the TST is a necessary structure at all schools. He says that more children are coming from dysfunctional homes and parents are also not equipped to parent the children adequately.

“In the past five, ten years or so, we are having problems with, more and more problems with children, coming from broken homes, dysfunctional homes, homes where parents are not adequately equipped to parent the children. So the problems that we are having are very, very diverse and very intense.”

4.2.2.4 Educators' training and development as TST members

The deputy principal encourages educators to make themselves available to attend workshops and constantly learn more, both from formal workshops and other educators, as he has done.

“... I've been exposed to many, many workshops to empower myself. I've been on parenting workshops, I've been on conflict resolution, conflict management workshops. I've been on stress relief workshops and so on. So I feel that maybe not through the TST but over the years I could tap into the knowledge that I gained on these workshops.”

4.2.2.5 Cooperation from WCED

The deputy principal recommends that the outside support which they need, such as social or psychological support, could possibly be financed by the WCED.

“... outside support possibly paid for by the department ...”

4.2.2.6 The need for further support

The deputy principal suggests that TSTs should form a forum where they can share knowledge and share training. By sharing information they need not work in isolation.

“It’s also good to know what’s happening at the schools and what avenues they followed and so we can share our resources and share our knowledge and share our training and only we can benefit from it and grow stronger by it.”

4.2.3 Interviews with the educators

The interviews with individual educators were interpreted and analysed under broad meta-themes of conceptualisation, design, implementation and impact. This is in accordance with the structure of all other interviews. The same procedures were followed as with the other interviews and I attempted to use the same categories. The data from the interviews will now be presented according to categories that emerged from open-coding, supported by excerpts from the transcripts of the interview.

4.2.3.1 The need for support

Respondents were all in agreement that there was a need at all schools for a forum such as a TST. It is my understanding that the educators join the TST for various reasons. All the respondents had a need for support and assistance from other educators that had led them to join the TST programme. Not only do they need support for the individual pupils, but they also need support from one another. Excerpts from the interviews are presented below and illustrate the educator's view on the need for support for educators.

Educator A: I think if it's run properly then it's definitely a needed structure and I honestly think we should be facilitating, training sessions and workshops and you know motivational workshops especially for teachers. Especially when it comes to learners. I personally don't think we are able to detect learning problems, certain learning problems in our classes, that is, even besides behavioural problems. I'm not even touching on that. I'm thinking there are learners with problems that, that we are not even aware of. A simple thing like handwriting that they struggle with. Okay, something like that can be deep-rooted and I speak of that personally because of my son. We can look at learners, especially left-handed learners. We think your handwriting is putrid, but there's a reason why they struggle with handwriting, They need physiotherapy, sometimes they end up in occupational therapy. We do a lot of damage because we are ignorant and, and that was my main motivation my main reason why I joined up, because I'd like to make a difference. Create an awareness, to bring about change in a positive way.

Educator B: It is a needed structure. Definitely for ... as I say first of all for identifying the problems. Giving the teacher some forum to report some cases as well and to get help, at least to attempt to get help.

Educator C: I think that it is needed, provided that it is you know done properly and there's constant feedback on cases that are reported and these things does [*sic*] not just dwindle off.

Deputy: Oh yes it is definitely a structure that is needed at all schools. Simply because of the nature of the problems that we are sitting with now. In the past five, ten years or so, we are having problems with, more and more problems with children, coming from broken homes, dysfunctional homes, homes where parents are not adequately equipped to parent the children. So the problems that we are having is very diverse and very intense. Much worse than it was say five, ten years ago. You find yourself with problems that you as an educator can't handle, you just can't handle it because of father absence, mother absence, lack of adequate responsible adults who impact on the lives of the children. There's just a total lack of that. We're also having younger and younger parents of children coming to school and these parents - it's obvious that they are not equipped to be parents. They are obviously victims of teenage pregnancies, of abuse themselves. So we're having child parents coming into the system and they don't have the foggiest notion of how to parent the children, how to mother the child adequately because they're just not there, they're just not mature enough.

So it's actually children bringing up children, if you like and that's a big problem.

4.2.3.2 The structure and role of the TST

While all the respondents were aware of how the TST was structured at their school, certain members of the TST were confused about the exact role of the TST.

Educator A: Man I am not sure. The role of the TST is really there for teachers' support. As teachers we don't really know where to go to for support. The TST is supposed to provide immediate support for teachers you know and I am not sure whether we're doing that you know, really doing that as a TST at the moment. We are not really running as effectively as we should.

Educator B: I'll start with the need for me to be part of the TST. I felt that as I was teaching, I've been there for about 10 years, I could see a growing need for support that I needed from other teachers. The varying social problems that the children had, the academic problems which I identified, but I couldn't help them with and I felt that the TST was at least one place where I could get that type of support and also network with other teachers and get some of my stress levels down. It was of benefit to me in that I could have a place to then record what the problem was, my finding even though maybe they were not spot on because I don't find myself to be professional or trained in such a way that I could identify for example autism or attention

deficit disorder or that kind of thing. So to look for people who are more skilled in that way it did help me to identify the problems. On the other hand I found that it went that far for me, in my experience, and no further. Because the time, when it did start, I think two years ago, at the school. The one psychologist who was placed at the school had about 13 other schools in this area alone. So you would report something and honestly it would really fall by the wayside, in my opinion, especially if the parents were not supportive of it.

Educator C: I always get a negative vibe. Teachers are always complaining in the meetings about the problem children and what can be done to help these kids and so. And I've never been to a meeting where there has been actual feedback and that like something positive has been done, something constructive has been ... because you always hear the same names coming up over and over again. I've never been in a meeting where I've received positive feedback yet.

4.2.3.3 Impact of the TST

The respondents use the TST forum to share their experiences with one another. They use the forum to interact and offload their problems. Some educators feel that this is not enough to really make an impact on the whole staff. Time constraints and other school-related commitments interfere with significant progress.

Educator A: There is a forum but we don't. I don't think we have enough time too really, to really have an impact. You know, I don't think we really make enough time for encouraging one another. You know in a way that it will impact others to go out and make a difference. That is not happening. It should happen, but it's not happening.

Educator B: I would feel that the whole staff should actually buy into it that's how I feel. We know about the TST, but if you're not really involved, the rest of the teachers or maybe outsiders should come and help even if it's just for example the Athlone Clinic to give us a full talk again. I recently attended the Abuse No More workshop at Eros and that was an eye opener for me. Even if it was just to give us directives to say we're not the professionals but this is what you have to look for. These are the signs. These are the possible lists of people that you can maybe contact if you suspect something.

Educator C: I think the meetings are very irregular and they always clash with other commitments so we're not always available to attend these meetings. And I do feel that I miss out on a lot because many times, as I said, they have meetings when I'm involved with extramural. So I'm missing out then; I don't always get feedback. This is what we discussed. I get a handout but that handout is not sufficient, you know, to inform me.

4.2.3.4 Educators' training and development as TST members

Respondents all agreed that no formal training was needed to belong to the TST. Certain members of the TST attend intermittent workshops to assist them with the challenges that they experience on the TST.

Educator A: No, they, the TST, don't give formal training and I've only attended this one and it wasn't really a course it was a workshop, Abuse No More. It was just only the one.

Educator B: No, not formal. We did have the school psychologist come to us when we started the TST as a group and she basically spent about two sessions, two afternoons just telling us the working of the TST, what the procedure is, the forms we need to fill in, and so on, but other than that, not.

Educator C: People like xxxx, they come in on a regular basis because they are professionals in their field. They know how to deal with those problem children. We are educators, we are not trained to deal with specific behavioural problems and I mean some children have even mental problems. Things like that which we are not trained to deal with such as emotional problems. So if we can be trained and maybe be trained to look out for certain symptoms where we think this is just a child or stupid child or something but we are actually aware of what we need to look out for. Then we know how to handle the situation differently.

4.2.3.5 Cooperation from the WCED

Respondents were divided on the issue of support provided by the Western Cape Education Department. They all agreed that not enough support was given to the TST.

Educator A: None, quite honestly.

I think they should provide, like I said earlier on, they should provide training. We're not trained to detect certain things in our classrooms or our learners, and we should be. They should provide training to equip us, to equip us to teach. What's the word, more diagnostically?. There's no provision for that because of ignorance. They should facilitate training sessions for teachers to equip us to teach more diagnostically.

Educator B: Yes, my experience has been very limited if I can speak of the Athlone Clinic alone. In my experience it's very committed people but also they deal with such a vast number of children coming in there just with social and academic problems, that most times the best case scenario is for the child or parent itself to find private help at a cost.

Educator C: Besides like LSEN and things like that, I don't know of any other support that we get. Maybe the Athlone Training Centre like xxxx that comes in to also support. That's all that I'm aware of.

4.2.3.6 The need for further support

Respondents were in agreement that they were in need of further support. They felt inadequately trained to deal with specific problems of the pupils. Their workload and big classes also hampered their effectiveness when dealing with pupils' problems.

Educator A: There's obviously support somewhere but we don't know where to go. It's not known to me. I don't know where to go to with certain things. I'm drawing on the parent centre. I'm trying to see them because I've just started. What happened was I had a meeting with five of my parents. These boys were really out of hand. They didn't accept authority, know no boundaries and it's quite a concern for me because they're going to become delinquents if we don't do something about it now. And what I've done as a way forward ... We're going to embark on a series of workshops. We've started out with raising boys and xxxx actually asked me to open it up to the Grade 4s and 5s because Grade 7 are leaving soon. I'm a very progressive person. I'm faced with a problem and then I think of a solution you know. And that is basically how I operate. I'm only aware of the parent centre for now. And I think we should make more use of the Athlone Clinic, also. I'm not quite sure of the other services they offer, but I think we should make more use of them.

Educator B: Best-case scenario I think every teacher needs to have an aid, needs to have someone that is trained in helping children with their social problems and

academic problems as well because we've got such a big load and we've got such big classes and sometimes you maybe pick up on a problem but it takes you so long to actually get to the child. So that is the best-case scenario; of course that does not happen in reality. I would say again that everybody needs to be brought on board. It's not just the TST's problem, it's everybody's problem.

Educator C: Well, like I said, meetings on a regular basis and getting professional people in to assist with training. Because many times I mean, look we've got xxxx on the staff and she's very helpful, but I feel it's a burden on her. She has so much to deal with so if we could get others in as well and get other people's point of view. Fresh perspectives.

4.2.4 Interview with the psychologist

Through the use of open-coding, the same categories were identified as in the first interview with the coordinator. The content of this interview will now be presented under the six categories, supported by excerpts from the transcript of the interview.

4.2.4.1 The need for support

The psychologist states that TSTs were necessary in schools and worked out guidelines to implement TSTs in schools.

“I’m xxxx, psychologist, work at the xxxx as it’s now called. I was the head of the clinic. The structure is different now. What we did is ... To say my role ... we sort of worked out a TST plan as a clinic. We worked out guidelines. We all believed that TSTs were necessary in schools and we worked out a set of guidelines that we all believed in. So instead of basic principles which the entire staff could agree with ... then we agreed that individuals might change the way they implemented these guidelines. So within that framework we worked out, we worked out separate programmes really. We knew what each other were doing but some of us wanted to emphasise some things more than others. So my role would be to be one of the team really, a member of the team.”

He also contends that TSTs were important, because it’s a shift from curative work to consultation and preventive work.

“What we did initially we had a meeting with ... We invited all school principals to a meeting at xxxx Tech a few years ago. It was also just to talk about the way we worked, but TSTs are an important part of that because it’s a shift from curative, one-on-one work, to consultation and preventative work. And that meeting was with principals and we were quite, we were pleasantly surprised that ... I’ve got the figures somewhere but it was out of about 90-odd principals nearly about 70, 80 came. You know which was ... It was unheard of that principals took us that seriously. Maybe because I was new and they wanted to see what I looked like. You know. I don’t

know. But we first did it, did that. Then what ... I'll tell you my model because different colleagues work slightly differently”.

The psychologist explains that his model was to approach the principal and the staff of the school. By doing this he gave support to both the principal and the staff.

“My model is to approach the school. To phone the principal and say look this is what we want to do. I want to come and meet you to talk about this. Meet the principal and discuss it. Then meet the whole staff and talk about that. And that's the way of getting the principal and the staff behind it or at least be informed so that everybody knows what's going on and then at that meeting of the staff you talk about the staff selecting a team. So that the team has to be ... It sort of has to belong to the staff really otherwise the staff see it as somebody else's project, it has to be their own so it's not just that democracy is a fancy word. You can't really work with people if you don't have some kind of democratic process going.

4.2.4.2 Structure and role of the TST

The psychologist explained the TST structure and role as implemented by them at various schools.

“It was always that the teachers would choose a representative to represent them in this team. We said that it's quite nice if you could get someone from every standard, every grade. Some schools didn't have that. It did

vary from school to school, how it looked and I wasn't prescriptive. My colleagues, some of my colleagues are very prescriptive. It's got to have one person per grade. It's got to have ... some people say the principal must be involved. In my experience, some TSTs have worked very well because the principal is involved. But TSTs have worked very very well exactly because the principal is not involved. At a particular school had the principal been involved it would not have worked. It does depend on the character of the school. But you definitely need the principal's backing. It can't work very well without the principal's backing. I spend a lot of time with principals and I take a lot of care in my relationships with principals. Because I feel that if I don't have a decent relationship with principals that it is very hard for him to take any work that I do seriously. You know. So, yes, there was a structure in my own mind and we developed a structure I suppose. We got a written-out structure that we use, one of my colleagues wrote for the high schools and it is a very clear structure."

4.2.4.3 Impact of the TST

The psychologist believes that the TST is a supportive structure to educators where other educators can listen to them and they can have time to reflect.

"Well, it gives people time out of the classroom to think about what they are doing in the classroom, It's several minds together putting thoughts together and that's very supportive. Supportive to teachers to have time to

think. To have people to listen to. What they're going through to have people who can hear them. And it's a thing I feel very strongly about. I don't think it happens often enough. I don't think there're enough places for it to happen".

4.2.4.4 Educator training and development as TST members

The psychologist would provide training workshops to support the educators by visiting the TST on a regular basis.

I'll do a series of training workshops. We started off by not ... I don't believe in training workshops. I believe in, that the training was in meeting the TST and actually visiting the TST on a regular basis and through that people got a sense of what TSTs were about and how TSTs worked. That is in my first year, that was how I worked. That was in '98. I came and I think it was probably '98, '99. I can't remember that. But we realised it was not really getting through to many schools and we sort of set goals. We said x number of schools we would like x number of schools to have TSTs by the end of the year. They were thumb sucks really, but we felt that we needed to get further. So we also had xxxx who was an intern with us one of these years and she had worked with xxxx who had been involved in training the Khayelitsha people. So we ... I was quite inspired by that and thought we must have formal training. But so we moved to do a form of training. I have colleagues who are more formal, who like to

work more formally anyway. So they would have preferred that. So it was really...It was really a development of. That's how our thought developed. Previously when I was working in Mitchell's Plain we didn't really do training; some worked and some didn't. But now we felt that every single school must have a TST, that was a very important goal."

The psychologist believes that educators should be involved in training at all times to better equip themselves. He believes that educators should do it as a group.

"Look, to me in my experience it's dependent on the people. Some people are just more motivated than others to do that. Some people don't see their job going much beyond school hours. It also depends on the ethos of the school. There's that kind of ethos of further training. You know to me it's crucial on any staff that training should be part of ... There should be an understanding that we all undergo training all the time. That's what keeps us motivated, that's what keeps us alive and obviously keeps us better equipped. It's much easier to do it if your colleagues are doing it. We're teaching other people, we've also got to be taught."

4.2.4.5 Cooperation from WCED

The psychologist states that they were invited to consult with the WCED, but that they just received a handout, a guideline. TSTs were being implemented on a voluntary basis by the WCED.

“We have never been told really. There has been a handout, not a handout, a guideline really that was developed that was sort of handed to us. We were probably invited to consult, I don’t remember that. But, so I’m not really sure what ... In Central Metropole it’s been seen as something that’s voluntary really. I mean we put a lot of pressures on schools. We will say it at clinics that we won’t take referrals from schools unless they come through a TST. So that puts pressure on the schools to have a TST. We say that any training we offer we will give priority to TST members and it’s in our interest that these people are better trained and receive the training first before anybody else. That’s the kind of way we have done it. We’ve done it I suppose by persuasion. With a bit of *krag* in the background but more by persuasion than by forcing people.”

4.2.4.6 The need for further support

The psychologist is of the opinion that educators are not getting enough support. They are being told to implement a new curriculum, but not how to overcome day-to-day problems that they encounter in their classrooms.

“To help the educator? Not enough. That’s my hobby horse. Not enough. I think that’s the only thing really. I don’t think there’s another ... I think teachers need a hearing. My experience is that at most training that I’ve been involved in, people have used that as an opportunity to talk about what they are going through. Then I realised what the need is. So most

training is support also you know, but not enough. There's a large staff who tells them how to do the new curriculum and the new this and the new that, but very little on how to survive from day to day in the classroom.”

4.3 To Conclude

After analysis and interpretation of the data, a summary of the findings was constructed. The analysis revealed that all respondents had a need for support and assistance from other educators and that had led them to join the TST programme. The findings and recommendations will be presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Introduction

Chapter 5 deals with the conclusions and recommendation. This chapter reflects on the extent to which the research aims were met. The data, as stated in Chapter 3, was collected through the use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with the TST coordinator, a psychologist, the deputy principal and various members of the TST. The findings are discussed under the four meta-themes of conceptualisation, design, implementation and the impact of the programme. The aim of this research was to evaluate the respondents' perception of the conceptualisation, the design, the implementation and the impact of the TST programme in a primary school.

5.1 The research objectives revisited

The aim of this study was to evaluate the TST programme in a primary school by exploring the following:

- ❖ To evaluate the conceptualisation of the TST programme.
- ❖ To evaluate the design of the TST programme.
- ❖ To evaluate the implementation of the TST programme.

- ❖ To evaluate the impact of the TST programme on the educators.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The Teacher Assistant Teams is based on a model that is generally classified as Teacher Support Teams (Chalfant, Pysh & Moultrie, 1979; Chalfant, Pysh, 1989). Traditional strategies of school-based assistance, whereby teachers are equipped to deal with problems which the learners may present, are dealt with by indirect service delivery. Service deliverers therefore serve as consultants to educators. They impart the necessary skills to educators and assist with problem solving. To reduce specialist intervention outside the school, service delivery is therefore school-based. Education support personnel work in multi-disciplinary teams to provide collaborative services. The aim of the TST is to find and share solutions to problems which pupils may have.

5.2.1 The conceptualisation and design of the TST programme

After the evaluation of the conceptualisation and design of the TST programme, the following research findings could be drawn:

- ❖ The TST team members provide support to educators, pupils and parents.
- ❖ The TST offers preventative programmes for learners.
- ❖ Intervention occurs at multiple levels.
- ❖ Educators collaborate to address and solve problems as a team.

5.2.2 The design of the TST programme

The evaluation of the design of the TST programme revealed that:

- ❖ The TST programme is based on a model designed by Creese, Daniels and Norwich (1997).
- ❖ The school has adapted the design to accommodate its own particular needs.
- ❖ TSTs are forums where professional educators share, manage and solve problems which arise from concerns in the classroom.
- ❖ Educators seek assistance from the TST forum to help them define the problem and consider possible alternatives and practical strategies.
- ❖ TST are forums which develop structured approaches to collaborative problem solving.
- ❖ Educators monitor and review situations through follow-up meetings.
- ❖ Educator representative of each grade, a coordinator, and a representative of the school management team, can call on outside support and advisory staff or parents when needed.
- ❖ Educators who make a request for support, meet once a week after school.
- ❖ A member of the TST will keep confidential notes (minutes) of each case that is discussed to enable follow-up work.
- ❖ One case is dealt with at each meeting (a new request or a follow-up case). If a case is not concluded a follow-up date is agreed upon.

- ❖ A team member collects relevant information about the case or teachers concerned before the meeting. If time constraints do not allow for this, the case is presented at the meeting.

5.2.3 Implementation of the TST programme

The implementation of the TST programme revealed that:

- ❖ The TST is a needed forum for educators at the school.
- ❖ The educators have effectively implemented a programme to suit their particular needs at the school.
- ❖ The TST programme has been run effectively to support the educator.
- ❖ An effective referral base of support services has been established.
- ❖ A lack of outside support is evident, as educators have to find a solution to the problem presented to them by other educators.
- ❖ A lack of adequate parental support and involvement adds to the educator's burden.
- ❖ Self actualisation skills were developed by educators.
- ❖ Collaboration between the TST and parents is very limited and there is little evidence of parents playing an active role in bridging the gap for learners who have SEN.
- ❖ The TST model implemented in the school was adapted and developed around the specific need of that particular school.
- ❖ The TST model is school-specific and forms a good basis to encourage participation from all educators employed at that school.

5.2.4 The impact of the TST programme

The evaluation of the TST programme revealed the following about the impact of the TST:

- ❖ The educators developed new skills to bridge the problems that arise as a result of classroom concerns.
- ❖ The educators developed a system that allowed them to share, manage and solve problems collaboratively.
- ❖ The educators felt that they did not get enough support from the WCED.
- ❖ The educators felt that they were not adequately trained to deal with some of the problems they were faced with.
- ❖ The educators developed new skills out of necessity to help them resolve problems which they encountered.
- ❖ The educators felt that the TST was a necessary support structure even if some meetings were limited to a de-stress session for educators.
- ❖ The educators felt that the whole school should be aware of the extent to which the TST functions.
- ❖ The educators felt that improvements to the TST could still be implemented.

5.3 Suggestions and Recommendations

The following recommendations could assist the TST to further develop the educators at their school. These recommendations may also benefit other TSTs and school

communities, while the WCED and other provincial education departments may wish to implement some of the suggestions made by the respondents.

5.3.1 The TST forum

The TST educator has a vital role to perform when it comes to resolving problems which are presented at a TST forum. A TST forum should therefore be considered for all schools as:

- ❖ It provides the educators with a means to assist educators, learners and parents with a way to address needs which arise within the classroom.
- ❖ It provides the educator with skills that are useful to provide preventative and curative services to learners with academic and social problems.
- ❖ The TST forum serves the community by addressing problems when there is inadequate assistance from support services.
- ❖ The TST serves as a link between the parent and the support services.
- ❖ The TST forum provides a school-base support structure for educators, learners and parents.
- ❖ The TST enhances the working conditions of educators.
- ❖ The TST facilitates the sharing of expertise between colleagues.
- ❖ The TST must be designed to fit the needs of that particular school as perceived by the TST members.

5.3.2 The TST coordinator

The coordinator manages the discussion and helps to form solutions to the discussions as:

- ❖ The coordinator would explain, question, draw out arguments and points of view from educators on the forum.
- ❖ The coordinator would clarify arguments or conclusions and summarise what had been decided as a plan of action to address the specific case.
- ❖ The coordinator builds a resource centre of contact persons or institutions that would assist the educators.
- ❖ The coordinator arranges workshops for parents and educators to become empowered with skills to help address problems.

5.3.3 The TST educator

The TST educator should be supported and encouraged to develop and provide strategies to resolve the problems which they may encounter. The following recommendations could be implemented:

- ❖ The educators learn new skills and knowledge to assist them with problem solving.
- ❖ The educators share expertise with colleagues.
- ❖ The educators network ideas.
- ❖ The educators seek peer support to resolve problems they experience in their classrooms.

- ❖ The educators develop confidence and competence by attending workshops to develop their skills.
- ❖ The educators receive emotional support.
- ❖ The educators learn new methods of teaching.
- ❖ The educators air their frustrations and de-stress by sharing similar difficulties.
- ❖ The educators make use of existing knowledge of other educators.
- ❖ The educators participate in ongoing retraining and upgrading of qualifications.

5.3.4 The school

The ethos of whole school development is important for the success of the TST as an intermediary form of provision between learner-focused support and whole-school policy initiatives.

The decision to integrate learners with special educational needs into the mainstream education system has meant that assessment and intervention must not only focus on individual difficulties but also on factors within the school that could exacerbate or prevent problems. The school should therefore be seen to:

- ❖ be committed to whole-school development and support a policy for learners with SEN;
- ❖ enhance provision for learners, especially those with SEN;
- ❖ provide access to different curriculum material to support learners with SEN;

- ❖ provide opportunity for educators to learn specific methods to assist them to provide helpful learners with SEN;
- ❖ adapt classrooms to be accessible to all learners;
- ❖ develop interpersonal relationships among the whole school staff; and
- ❖ develop awareness of the culture of the whole school population.

5.3.5 The school management team

The support of the school management team is an important component in the effective running of a TST forum. The school management team should be seen to:

- ❖ support the effects of the TST;
- ❖ be part of the development of the TST;
- ❖ encourage entire staff to be involve in the process of developing and assisting the TST;
- ❖ encourage consultation and collaboration among the educators to share ideas of how the TST concept can better address the needs of their school.

5.3.6 Support services

The need for adequate support services are quite apparent from the data collected from the respondents. The WCED should seek to support and encourage educators for the valued service they provide to learners and the community. The WCED should support the school by:

- ❖ providing more opportunity for consultation with professional trained staff such as psychologists;
- ❖ providing workshops for skills training and capacity;
- ❖ providing better professional services to help educators deal with SEN by appointing more social workers;
- ❖ providing an assistant for educators with large classrooms; and
- ❖ providing parent education programmes on relevant topics to assist parents with learners who have SEN.

5.4 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to evaluate the conceptualisation, design, implementation and impact of the TST programme in a primary school in the Western Cape. The reason for this evaluation was that the TST is a much-needed forum and formed a critical part of a school which sought to constantly improve and support educators and learners.

The research conducted in this study revealed that the TST is indeed a much-needed structure which serves to support and improve the educator. The TST helps the educator to deal with classroom-based problems which the educator encounters on a daily basis. The TST is a support structure which gives the educator the ability to receive and impart knowledge and skills which serve as an invaluable mechanism to deal with problems which educators encounter in the classroom.

The TST programme was conceptualised and designed for an inclusive education system. There has therefore been a movement away from excluding groups of learners, who have SEN, from mainstream classes.

The recognition of a whole-school approach to SEN has successfully been implemented at this school. The school has implemented the TST to cater for the specific needs encountered at this school. Although the TST is based on a generic model, it was adapted to suit the school's individual needs.

One of the limitations to this research was that this study did not include pupils and parents. Future research could focus on these stakeholders and their perceptions of a TST programme. The involvement of departmental support teams such as social workers, psychologist, school clinics and child welfare societies need to be investigated in more depth, as they play a vital role to support the TST programme.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrews, G. 1989. The management of support services: conflicts and tension in the role of the support teacher. In Bunton, R. & Macdonald, G. (eds). *Health promotion: discipline and diversity*. London: Routledge.

Ashton, P.T. & Webb, R.B. 1986. *Making a difference: Teachers' sense of efficacy and student achievement*. New York: Longman.

Babbie, E.R. & Mouton, J. 2001. *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Brümmer, L. 1998. *The welcome book: A guide to help teachers include children with disabilities into the classroom*. Lansdowne: Early Learning Resource Unit.

Chalfant, J.C., Pysh, M.V.D. & Moultrie, R. 1979. Teacher Assistant Teams: A model for within – building problem solving. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 2, 85-96.

Chalfant, J.C., Pysh, M.V. 1989. Teacher Assistant Teams: Five descriptive studies on 96 teams. *Remedial and Special Education*, 10, 49-58.

Cheminais, R. 2000. *Special educational needs for newly qualified and student teachers: a practical guide* (edited by C.W. Gains). London: David Fulton.

Children's Charter of South Africa, The. 1992.
<http://www.anc.org.za/misc/childcht.html> [29 November 2004].

College of William & Mary. Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC). 2002. *Instructional support teams*. <http://www.wm.edu/ttac/ist.html> [14 May 2004].

Concise Oxford dictionary of current English. 8th ed. 1990. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa see South Africa. 1996.

Craig, S., Hull, K., Haggart, A.G. & Perez-Selles, M. 2000. Promoting cultural competence through teacher assistance teams. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32(3):6-12.

Creese, A., Daniels, H. & Norwich, B. 1997. *Teacher support teams in primary and secondary schools: resource materials for teachers*. London: David Fulton in association with the National Association for Special Educational Needs.

DoE see South Africa. Department of Education.

Fullan, M. 1985. Change process and strategies at the local level. *Elementary School Journal*, 85(3):390-421, January.

- Fullan, M. 1993. *Change forces: probing the depth of educational reform*. London: Falmer.
- Fullan, M. 1999. *Change forces: the sequel*. London: Falmer.
- Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. (eds). 1992. *What's worth fighting for in your school? Working together for improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Fullan, M. & Stiegelbauer, S. 1991. *The new meaning of educational change*. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gillham, B. 2000. *The research interview*. London: Continuum.
- Glesne, C. & Peshkin, A. 1992. *Becoming qualitative researchers: an introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Goodlad, J.I. 1984. *A place called school: prospects for the future*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Gous, J. & Mfázwe, L. 1998. *Learners with special needs*. Sandton: Heinemann.
- Green, L.W. & Kreuter, M.W. 1991. *Health promotion planning: an educational and environmental approach*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- Hanko, G. 1990. *Special needs in ordinary classrooms: supporting teachers*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hargreaves, A. 1991. Cultures of teaching: a focus for change. In Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (eds). *Understanding teacher development*. London: Cassell: 216-240.
- Hargreaves, A. & Dawe, R. 1989. Coaching as an unreflective practice: contrived collegiality or collaborative culture. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco.
- Hudson, P.J., Correa, V.I., Morsink, C.V. & Dykes, M.K. 1987. A new model for preservice training: teacher as collaborator. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 10:191-193, Fall.
- Huysamen, G.K. 1987. *Introductory statistics and research design*. Cape Town: G.K. Huysamen.
- Idol, L. 1997. Key questions related to building collaborative and inclusive schools. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 30(4):384-394, July/August.
- Joseph, F., Johnson Jr. & Ginsberg, M. 1996. Building Capacity Through School Support Teams. *Educational Leadership*, 54 (3): 80-82, November

- Kaiser, S.M. & Woodman, R.W. 1985. Multi-disciplinary teams and group decision-making techniques: possible solutions to decision-making problems. *The School Psychology Review*, 14(4):457-470.
- Little, J. 1990. The persistence of privacy, autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations. *Teachers' College Records*, 91 (4):509-536.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. 1989. *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merriam, S.B. 1988. *Case study research in education: a qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mostyn, B. 1987. The content analysis of qualitative research data: a dynamic approach. In Brenner, M., Brown, J. & Canter, D. (eds). 1985. *The research interview: uses and approaches*. London: Academic Press.
- Mouton, J. 1996. *Understanding social research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- NCSNET *see* South Africa. National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training.
- Pheiffer, R.I. & Tittler, B.I. 1983. Utilizing the multidisciplinary team to facilitate a school-family systems orientation. *The School Psychology Review*, 12:168-173, Spring.
- Phillips, V. & McCullough, L. 1990. Consultation-based programming: instituting the collaborative ethic in schools. *Exceptional Children*, 56(4):291-304, January.
- Powney, J. & Watts, M. 1987. *Interviewing in educational research*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pugach, M.C. & Johnson, L.J. 1995. *Collaborative practitioners, collaborative schools*. Denver, CO: Love.
- Putnam, J.W., Spiegel, A.N. & Bruininks, R.H. 1995. Future directions in education and inclusion of students with disabilities: a Delphi investigation. *Exceptional Children*, 61(6):553-576.
- Ridley, M. 1996. *The origins of virtue*. London: Penguin.
- Rosenholtz, S.J. 1989. *Teacher's workplace: the social organization of schools*. New York: Longman.
- Rutman, L. (ed.). 1984. *Evaluation research methods: a basic guide*. 2nd ed. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Sailor, W. 1991. Special education in the restructured school. *Remedial and Special Education*, 12(6):8-22.

Scriven, M. 1991. *Evaluation thesaurus*. 4th ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Solity, J. & Bickler, G. (eds). 1994. *Support services: issues for education, health and social service professionals*. London: Cassell.

South Africa. 1996. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: as adopted on 8 May 1996 and amended on 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly. One law for one nation: Act 108 of 1996*. Cape Town: Constitutional Assembly.

South Africa. Department of Education. 1995. *White Paper on education and training. Education and training in a democratic South Africa: first steps to develop a new system*. Cape Town: Department of Education.

South Africa. Department of Education. 1999. *Consultative Paper no. 1 on special education: building an inclusive education and training system: first steps*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

South Africa. Department of Education. 2001. *Education White Paper 6: Special needs education: building an inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

South Africa. National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET). 1997. *Education for all: from special needs and support to developing quality education for all learners: summary of public discussion document*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

South Africa. National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET). 1998. *Quality education for all: overcoming barriers to learning and development*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

Stacey, R.D. 1996. *Complexity and creativity in organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. 1992. Schools as inclusive communities. In Stainback, W. & Stainback, S. (eds). *Controversial issues confronting special education: divergent perspectives*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon: 29-43

Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J.M. 1998. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wragg, E.C. 1978. *Conducting and analysing interviews*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham School of Education. (Rediguides Series 11: *Guides in educational research*.)

Young Minds (Organisation). 1996. *Mental health in your school: a guide for teachers and others working in schools*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

S. Wheeler
15 Aintree Avenue
Ascot
OTTERTY
7800

Ph.(021) 703 63 81

(Cell) 073 1428 965

E-mail: towheeler@telkomsa.net

Western Cape Educational Department
Private Bag X 9114
Cape Town
8000

Attention: Dr. R. Cornelissen

Dear Sir,

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YORK ROAD PRIMARY
SCHOOL – REFERENCE NO 20030331-0045**

The title of my research is **Teacher Support Team Programme in a Primary School**.

My study focuses on a teacher support team programme for the purpose of improving its effectiveness, using a formative evaluation approach. I would like to investigate the implementation and design of the TST and would also like to evaluate the support teachers get through collaboration at York Road Primary School in Lansdowne.

The response will be educators and related WCED staff. The intended period of research should take place during the third school term (June to September) and be conducted during the afternoon sessions when the TST meets.

I intend to conduct my interviews as an inquiry so that I can explore the response's views and opinions on various aspects of the TST, therefore my questions may not be along a strict sequence of definite questions but open-ended.

It would be of great benefit if I may have your consent to conduct my research and make use of any material that is the intellectual property of the WCED, which may assist me with my research.

Thanking you in anticipation.

S. WHEELER

Appendix B

Name: Dr. Shing Chen
 Title: Associate Professor
 School: York Road Primary
 Address: 15 Airfile Avenue
 Ottery
 7800



Western Cape Government
 Western Cape Education Department
 15 de Waalse Wal, Wynberg, Kaapstad

Dr. Shing Chen
 15 Airfile Avenue
 Ottery
 7800


RESEARCH PROPOSAL: TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM PROGRAMS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

1. Parents, educators and learners are asked no consent to appear you in your investigation. Parents, educators, teachers and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
2. All moral and ethical arrangements concerning your investigation.
3. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
4. The Study is to be conducted from 1st June 2003 to 30th September 2003.
5. No research can be conducted during the term when exams are proceeding and writing up for examinations (October to December 2003).
6. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Dr R. Combrinck at the contact number above quoting the reference number.
7. A prototype of this letter is submitted to the principal of the school where the relevant research is to be conducted.
8. Your research will be carried out at the following School: York Road Primary.
9. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director Education Research.
10. The Department received a copy of the completed research/evaluation/thesis addressed to:
 The Director, Education Research
 Western Cape Education Department
 Private Bag 9114
 CAPE TOWN
 8000

We wish you success in your research!

Yours sincerely,


 HEAD OF EDUCATION
 DATE: 19/05/03

WESTERN CAPE GOVERNMENT
 WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
 15 DE WAALE WAL, WYNBERG, KAAPSTAD
 TEL: 021 959 1000 FAX: 021 959 1001
 E-MAIL: education@wcg.gov.za

Appendix C

S. Wheeler
15 Aintree Avenue
Ascot
OTTERY
7800

Dear Educator,

The education system is constantly changing and it is my objective to investigate the support teachers receive and how teachers feel about the structures that have been implemented.

I am in the process of doing research on the **Teacher Support Team Programme in a Primary School.**

This research affects you and your colleagues, therefore your input would be of great value to me and the teaching profession.

Your co-operation and contribution to this research is voluntary and highly valued.

It is for this reason that the information gathered will be treated as highly confidential and in no way will you be identified as person or school through the final report.

Your participation and contribution would be greatly appreciated.

S. WHEELER

CONSENT FOR FINDNGS TO BE USED IN RESEARCH

I,give my consent, without reservation, to participate in this research.

I have no objection to the information that may be published.

Sign.....

Witness.....

Date.....

Date.....

Appendix D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview:

My aim is to obtain the opinions of individual educators on the TST programme. The questions that may be asked will take the form of an inquiry, with open-ended type questions.

Questions:

I am interested in the improvement of the TST programme, how it is conducted and how it has improved you as an educator. I would like you to tell me why you felt the need to become part of the TST programme.

Tell me why the TST has become important to you and how it has been a benefit (if any) to you. My role during the interviews is to listen to your opinion. If the need should arise I would like you to elaborate on some of your answers.

Probes:

It is important to get clarity on the answers given by the educator. The educator's actions, experiences and activities related to the TST will have to be clear. I would like to use probing question to obtain clarity.

Opinions:

How the educator interprets the role of the TST is important. The intended goals of the TST and the values and desires experienced by the educator will be explored.

Closing Questions:

Would you like to add anything else that you feel is important to the interview?

How do you feel about this interview?

Appendix E

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to research the **Teacher Support Team Programme in a Primary School**. Your contribution is of great importance. You are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire as honestly and objectively as possible. The information will be treated as highly confidential. You will not be identified as person or school through the analysis.

Your co-operation with this research is highly appreciated.

Instructions:

* Please answer all questions.

* Please complete the questionnaire by marking (x) the appropriate number in each block.

* Please give your personal opinion and do not consult colleagues or other persons for their opinion.

Mark one number for each question to show whether you agree or disagree:

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. agree
4. strongly agree

1.	I am part of the TST programme.	1	2	3	4
2.	There is a need for the TST programme.	1	2	3	4
3.	Since being part of the TST programme, I find I can resolve learners' problems more effectively.	1	2	3	4
4.	I find working in collaboration with other educators on the TST has improved my teaching skills.	1	2	3	4
5.	I am satisfied with the TST programme as implemented at this school.	1	2	3	4
6.	The Education Department should do more to support the TST programme.	1	2	3	4
7.	The goals of the TST are being met.	1	2	3	4
8.	The TST programme has helped to improve the quality of education at this school.	1	2	3	4
9.	Improvements to the TST programme can still be implemented.	1	2	3	4
10.	I feel that sharing my problems and ideas with other educators has helped me resolve problems more effectively.	1	2	3	4
11.	The TST programme has been a benefit to me.	1	2	3	4
12.	I have grown as an educator as a result of the help I receive from the TST programme.	1	2	3	4
13.	The learners are responding positively to the interventions discussed in the TST meetings.	1	2	3	4
14.	The TST programme would be an asset to all schools	1	2	3	4

Appendix F

Table: Agree and Disagree Responses and Percentages

QUESTIONS	AGREE	%	DISAGREE	%
1	9	100%	0	0%
2	9	100%	0	0%
3	9	100%	0	0%
4	9	100%	0	0%
5	8	89%	1	11%
6	9	100%	0	0%
7	8	89%	1	11%
8	7	78%	2	22%
9	9	100%	0	0%
10	9	100%	0	0%
11	8	89%	1	11%
12	8	89%	1	11%
13	4	44%	5	56%
14	9	100%	0	0%

Appendix G

CASE REFERRAL FORM FROM EDUCATOR TO THE TST

Date of referral to the TST:

Date of TST discussion of case:

Learner's name:

Learner's age:

Educator's name:

Grade:

- 1) Problem statement and what assistance the educator would like from the TST?

- 2) Relevant background information

- 3) What are the learner's strengths?

- 4) What are the learner's weaknesses?

- 5) What has the educator already tried in order to assist the learner with his / her difficulties?

- 6) Preferred recommendations from the TST (educator to note these here at the relevant TST meeting).

Appendix H

TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM MINUTES

Date:

Name of Scribe:

Name of minute taker:

Present:

Apologies

AGENDA

NEW CASE DETAILS

Name of learner:

Age:

Name of teacher:

Grade:

Case Context (e.g. A brief description of family, medical history, current medication, academic history, past and current social / emotional / behavioural factors etc).

Duration / Intensity / Frequency of the Behaviour of Concern:

Appendix I

TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM MINUTES

New Case Details Continued

Name of learner:

Strengths / Opportunities:

Teacher's interventions implemented:

Preferred sequence of TST interventions:

Follow-up date:

Appendix J

TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM MINUTES

Date:

Name of scribe:

Name of minute taker:

Present:

Apologies:

AGENDA

Ongoing Case Details

Name of learner:

Age:

Name of teacher:

Grade:

Teacher feedback *re* action outcomes, and proposed future actions:

Appendix K

HOW THE PROCESS WORKS FROM START TO FINISH...

The educator refers the case to the TST coordinator.
(Verbal / Written using a case referral *pro forma*)



The TST coordinator prioritises and decides on which cases will be heard and informs the relevant educators when their cases will be presented.



The TST meets

The structure of this meeting can vary. Two such structures are as follows:

Meetings start with feedback on previous cases due to be heard [15mins] and are then followed by two new cases following the problem-solving sequence [25mins each]

OR

Separate meetings are scheduled for report backs and for new cases.



The educator and the TST scribe / secretary keep a written record of what was discussed [meeting minutes including the action plan]



The intervention is implemented



The educator reports back to the TST at a designated meeting. If further action is required, the TST coordinator re-prioritises the case.

LSEN facilitators and / or psychologists can be invited to attend TST meetings where particularly challenging cases are being heard. When all avenues of school-based support have been exhausted, the learner can be referred to the SLES team for additional support or assessment.