

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INCLUSION OF
LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT INTO
MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: THE LEARNERS' PARENTS'
AND EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES**

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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NCEDIWE GRATIA NGXATA

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own unaided work and that any assistance obtained has been acknowledged in the text. No part of this thesis has been previously submitted to any other university.

NCEDIWE GRATIA NGXATA

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to all people with disabilities, their families and people in the disability sector, to them "the struggle continues"

ABSTRACT

The study explores the experiences of inclusion of learners with visual impairment into mainstream schools in Mdantsane and Duncan Village in the Eastern Cape. The learners previously attended a special school away from home for the visually impaired in Port Elizabeth.

The study delves into the barriers to inclusion as identified by the parents, educators and learners. A study of this nature was essential as many learners with visual impairment, are sent away to special schools on the grounds that they are unfit to attend mainstream schools when they could do well in mainstream schools when provided with appropriate support. As inclusive education is fairly new in South Africa, studies of this kind provide the Department of Education with some understanding of what the situation is with regard to the implementation of inclusive policies.

The study attempts to establish from the participants what they think inclusive education is, the reason for introducing inclusive education, the barriers to inclusive education and the kind of support required to implement inclusive education in South Africa.

Data collection was through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A sample of educators, learners and parents was selected from two high schools and one primary school. Coding was used in data reduction and analysis.

The study revealed that some learners, educators and parents are not totally against inclusive education as long as they could be provided with the necessary support. The study also revealed the excitement of learners and parents about attending nearby schools which are close to their homes.

However two parents and learners are not satisfied due to lack of support and would rather go back to special school.

The study ends with recommendations about how inclusive education could be intensified to ensure that learners with disabilities benefit from the mainstream schools. There is no doubt that this research study will be a strong contribution towards inclusive education initiatives particularly with regard to learners with visual impairment in the Eastern Cape Province.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. WP6 White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education
2. INDS White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy
3. DPOs Disabled People's Organisation
4. DPSA Disabled People South Africa
5. RDP/WP White Paper on Reconstruction and Development Programme
6. UN United Nations
7. NCSNET National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
8. NCESS National Committee on Education Support Services
9. WHO World Health Organisation
10. UNESCO United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
11. WPET White Paper on Education and Training
12. UNDP United Nations Development Programme
13. OBE Outcomes Based Education
14. OSDP Office on the Status of Disabled Persons
15. IDDP International Day of Disabled Persons
16. ABET Adult Basic Education Training

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter presents the problem statement, background and rationale for the study. Furthermore it also attempts to give the context of this research study, the methodology, and the aims and goals of the study.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study examines the experiences of the inclusion of learners with visual impairment into mainstream schools. It explores the experiences of the educators, parents and the learners with visual impairment themselves. These learners previously attended Khanyisa Special School for the visually impaired in Port Elizabeth. The criteria for admission to the school was through assessments conducted by a doctor who would declare the child unfit to attend ordinary schools.

Khanyisa Special School is a boarding school, which means children as young as the age of five have to leave their parents and siblings in order for them to access education. The parents were only able to see their children during school holidays as most of the parents could not afford to pay for transport to take them to Port Elizabeth. The learners in the study are from Duncan Village and Mdantsane, which are both townships in East London.

Four years ago there was instability at the school due to internal problems. The parents, concerned about their children's lives and future, decided to take their children out of Khanyisa and approach local schools for their admission. They managed to have their children placed in nearby schools. The parents were unaware of inclusive education when they approached the local schools - they were simply desperate for their children to receive education.

These learners were the first learners with visual impairment to be admitted at these particular schools. The value of the study is to gain knowledge of the experiences of the learners, parents and educators about inclusive education, a new concept and approach in South Africa.

1.2 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

One of the greatest challenges faced by the world at the present moment is dealing with the continuous exclusion of certain people from the mainstream of society. Such people are denied meaningful participation in the economic, social, and cultural life of their communities. People with disabilities are amongst the most excluded people worldwide, the severity of exclusion differing from one particular country to the other.

In South Africa the bulk of people with disabilities have been excluded from the mainstream of society, resulting in the denial of access to fundamental social, political and economic rights. The reasons for the exclusion include the political and economic inequalities of the apartheid government system, social attitudes, and a discriminatory and weak legislative framework, which sanctioned and reinforced barriers (INDS) 1997:2).

The INDS (1997:9) argues that disability has historically been regarded as mainly a health and welfare issue and state intervention has, thus been channelled through welfare institutions. As a result of this viewpoint, there has been very limited or no commitment to dealing with disability in other spheres of government. Besides, the INDS (1997:9) states that the vast majority of people with disabilities have been assisted by people concerned with creating a more 'caring' environment, whose aims were to provide medical treatment or to create alternatives to begging or 'hiding away'. This exclusion has been justified on the basis that it is for their own good.

The medical model thus viewed a person with a disability as sick and as set apart from the rest of society by his or her disability (Vlachou, 1997:13).

Marks (1999:75) points out that the medical model functions to justify the exclusion of people with disabilities, through the inclination to explore and explain disability at the level of medical solutions to physical defects. Oliver (1986) in Watermeyer, (2000:4) echoes a similar sentiment by asserting that "the onus is very firmly placed on the disabled people to cope and adapt in a society adapted to the needs of non-disabled people". The social attitudes which resulted from the perception of disability as a health and welfare issue have invaded all areas of society, resulting in the isolation of people with disabilities and their families from their communities and mainstream society. The dependency created by the medical model disempowers people with disabilities and isolates them from the mainstream society (INDS, 1997:9).

The medical model also led to the exclusion of the majority of children with disabilities from regular schools, which resulted as INDS (1997:9) suggests, in the perception of such people as inadequate human beings who are unfit to be included in the mainstream economic and social life. This differentiation, Vlachou (1997; 13) contends, has been based on the principle that some children, due to individual deficits, 'cannot cope' within the ordinary educational system.

The author adds that segregated education, however, tends to assume that the children in question have been institutionally predestined to live secluded adulthood lives. Tomlinson (1982) in Vlachou, (1997: 46) concludes by arguing that segregated education is a major cause of society's widespread prejudices against people with disabilities. The medical model thus compromised the dignity and self -concept of people with disabilities, resulting in gross violation of their rights, although it could have come about unintentionally as the unfortunate consequence of altruistic interest.

Over the past decade, the Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) all over the world have worked to reposition disability as a human rights issue. This changing view has arisen within an international context, which culminated in 1993, in the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (INDS, 1997: v). According to the United Nations (1994,8), "The purpose of the Standard Rules is to ensure that all people with disabilities, as members of their societies, may exercise the same rights and obligations as others."

Some of the people with disabilities in South Africa came together in early 1982 to mobilise themselves. The main aim was to build a strong civil movement of organisations controlled by people with disabilities themselves. Central to the disability rights movement is the claim of disability as a human rights and development issue. The mobilisation further gained momentum with the advent of democracy in 1994, culminating in the promulgation of the INDS (1997) (DPSA 2001:84).

The DPOs thus took it upon themselves to bring about a paradigm shift. The shift was from the medical model to the social model. Of significance to the concept of a social model of disability is the principle of self-representation by people with disabilities through DPOs (INDS, 1997:11). Hence their slogan "Nothing about Us without Us". The social model can be regarded as striving to explore how the societal institutions contributed to the oppression of people with disabilities. According to the INDS (1997:11), the social model of disability suggests that the collective disadvantage of people with disabilities is due to a complex form of institutional discrimination. It puts it succinctly, "disability is socially created and has little to do with the impairments of people with disabilities."

The view by the INDS (1997:11) affirms the sentiments by Abberley (1996) and Lunt (1994) in Watermeyer, (2000:7) who both argue that the locus of disability is reversed from the person to society and the failure of society to cater for the needs of persons with impairments. As a result of the social model, the disability rights movements believe that the remedy to the problem of disability lies in the restructuring of society. The social model of disability, as professed by DPOs in South Africa, was thus strengthened by the adoption of the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1994 (RDP/WP) and later the Constitution of South Africa in 1996.

The RDP is an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework that seeks to mobilise all the country's resources towards the final eradication of the results of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future (RDP W/P: 1994:7). It further deplores the segregation in education, health, welfare, transport and employment, all of which left deep scars of inequality and economic inefficiency. The RDP W/P (1994:41), mindful of the plight of people with disabilities, commits itself by asserting that "the government will design, in consultation with people with disabilities a comprehensive programme for the disabled which will enhance their engagement in society and remove discriminatory practices against them, particularly in the workplace."

Pretorious and Lemmer (1998) in Pretorious, (1998:2) explain that Section 29 of the Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 spells out the provision for education in South Africa. He points out that among other provisions Section 29 recognises that:

- Everyone has a right to basic education.
- Everyone has a right to further education and education in the official language of their choice where this reasonably practicable
- Education should undergo transformation in accordance with democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom that underpin the Constitution (Pretorious and Lemmer (1998) in Pretorious (1998:2).

The RDP/ WP (1994) and the Constitution (1996) could thus be viewed as having paved a way for other legislation that was passed in approaching disability as a human rights issue resulting in the promulgation of the INDS(1997). The vision of the INDS (1997:v) is a society for all, meaning that there should be an integration of disability issues in all government development strategies, planning, implementation and monitoring spheres of government. The INDS (1997: v) identified key policy areas. These include prevention, health care, rehabilitation, public education, barrier-free access, transport, communications, education, employment, social security, community development and housing. The White Paper has developed policy objectives, strategies and mechanisms in each of these areas (INDS, 1997: v)

According to the INDS (1997:v), government departments and state bodies have a responsibility to make certain that, in each line function, concrete steps are taken to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access the same fundamental rights and responsibilities as any other South African. To co-ordinate this activity, the Office on the Status of Disabled Persons was been established in the Office of the Deputy President and later moved to the Office of the Presidency. The Office on the Status of Disabled Persons will therefore work parallel to the various state bodies and departments in order to further the development of a disability friendly environment (INDS, 1997 v-vi).

The Department of Education (2001:3) claims that the first five years from 1994 of educational reconstruction focused on the systematic reform geared towards dismantling apartheid created structures and procedures. It further argues that educational reform has been a central part of South Africa's reconstruction and development programme. In doing so the Department of Education (2001) asserts that it had to be driven by two imperatives. Firstly, "the government had to ensure that it provides a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice.

Secondly "a system of lifelong learning had to be established to enable South Africans to respond to the enormous economic and social challenges of the 21ST century" (Department of Education (2001:3).

In an attempt to address the inequalities of the past which resulted in the exclusion of most children with disabilities from the education system, the Minister and the Department of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) in 1997 (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:i). The NCSNET/NCESS report attempted to identify barriers and needs arising as a result of the general inequalities of South African society in the area of special needs education or specialised education. (These barriers will be discussed in-depth later in the literature review section).

During the apartheid, era specialised education and support were provided on a racial basis, with the best human, physical and material resources reserved for whites whilst schools for blacks were systematically under-resourced. Specialised education and support has predominantly been provided for a small percentage of learners with disabilities, consequently most of the learners with disabilities have been unable to access education (WP6, 2001:5).

According to the WP6 (2001:14), for example, "the incidence of disabilities in the Eastern Cape constitutes 17,39% of the disabled population in South Africa, yet the province has only 10,79% of the total number of special schools in the country. 0,28% of learners in the Eastern Cape are enrolled in special schools, yet the overall incidence figure for the population of disabled persons (of all ages) is 17,39%. It thus follows then that most children with disabilities were and still are denied access to education.

The vision of the NCSNET/NCESS(1997:4) is that of an education and training system that promotes education for all and fosters the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning. Such learning centres, it is envisaged, would enable learners to participate actively in the education process so that they can develop their potential and participate as equal members of society. The NCSNET/NCESS principles guiding the broad strategies to achieve this vision include:

- Acceptance of principles and values contained in the Constitution and White Papers on Education and Training
- Human rights and social justice for all learners
- Participation and social integration
- Equal access to single inclusive education system
- Access to curriculum
- Equity and redress
- Community responsiveness
- Cost effectiveness.

The vision, therefore, is the total transformation of the education system resulting in an integrated and inclusive approach with the emphasis on the collaboration of stakeholders. As a response to the findings of the NCSNET/NCESS report, the WP6 (2001) came into being. The WP6 (2001) outlines how the education and training system must transform itself to contribute to establishing a caring and humane society (WP6, 2001:12).

It should be noted though that the parents in this research were, however, ignorant of the WP6, 2001 when they took their children to the local schools. The educators themselves were not even aware of the policy when they accepted the learners.

The researcher, who works in the field of disability, was aware of the children who had been admitted to the mainstream schools and had an interest in exploring their experiences. This curiosity was intensified by the promulgation of the South African Education White Paper 6 2001(WP6). In the WP6 (2001:6), the Ministry of Education expresses its commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate their learning needs.

The WP6 (2001:7) states "in accepting this inclusive approach we acknowledge that the learners who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion in South Africa are those who have historically been termed 'learners with special educational needs' i.e. learners with disabilities and impairments." The government thus recognises the fact that people with disabilities are part and parcel of society and therefore should enjoy the privileges that are being enjoyed by everybody else.

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Disability - The issue of the definition of disability has been controversial and continues to bring up many debates. Watermeyer (2000:6) affirms this by asserting that "as in all fields of study and concern which evoke uncertainty, anxiety, and strong emotions of various kinds in individuals, shifting trends of political correctness with regard to terminology have been a feature of disability studies literature."

The Department of Health, (1999:12) states that in 1980 the World Health Organisation developed a classification called the "International Classification on Impairment, Disability and Handicap" (ICIDH). This version of the ICIDH was criticised for being based on a medical model of disability.

People with disabilities, through their organisations, continue to raise concerns and reject these attempts to categorise them. The organisations are of the opinion that disability needs to be defined within context, rather than focusing on the inability of people that inadvertently leads to stigmatisation and categorisation (DPSA, 2001:6). The definition of impairment and disability, therefore, had to take into consideration the shift in view of disability from a medical model to a social model.

Abberley (1987) in Watermeyer (2000:11) argues that the term 'disability' represents a dynamic and complex system of social, financial, environment, and psychological disadvantages inflicted on impaired people as result of society that takes no or little account of their existence in the design and organisation of its functioning. It is against this background that French (1993) in Watermeyer, (2000:11) points out that blindness, is thus impairment, whilst the discriminating availability of literature in modalities accessible only to sighted people, is socially condensed and politically mediated, disability.

- *Impairment* – Finkelstein and French (1993) in Watermeyer (2000:11)) define impairment as the lacking part or a limb or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body. The authors further define disability as the loss or limitation of opportunities that prevents people who have impairments from taking part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers.

Clearly the above argument portrays disability as an imposition on people who are impaired. DPSA (2001:4) states that the disability movement believes that it is the right of the individual to decide whether he or she is disabled or not and that no one should be forced to relate or belong to the group of citizens commonly known as disabled. Although some disabled people prefer the terms, 'physically challenged' and 'differently abled', these should not be generally used.

The disability rights movement of South Africa accepts both terms 'disabled person' and 'person with a disability' (2001:16).

- *Assistive devices* - this refers to equipment or adaptations, which are required by some learners to access the curriculum and participate in effective processes of learners (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:iv).
- *Special educational needs* - refers to the needs or priorities, which the individual person or the system may have which must be addressed to ensure effective learning (NCSNET/NCESS,1997:2)
- *Learners experiencing barriers to learning* - the NCSNET/NCESS, acknowledging that special needs often arise as a result of barriers within the curriculum, the centre of learning, the system of education, and the broader social context it is suggested that instead of referring to "special needs", should rather refer to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:v). It should be noted, though, that other countries continue to use the term "special educational needs" and presently it is only South Africa, which prefers to use "barriers to learning and development"(NCSNET/NCESS, 1997).
- *Visual impairment* -Snyman and Bloem (2001) in Engelbrecht & Green, (2001:171) define visual impairment as a partial or total loss of vision due to a medical condition such as congenital conditions, birth trauma, disease or injury, causing inability to function normally.
- *Visual disability* refers to functional limitations due to the impairment, involving the loss of ability to perform daily activities or essential social roles, for example the inability to read print.

A learner therefore whose visual impairment interferes with optimal learning and achievement, could be regarded as disabled, unless adaptations are made in the methods of presenting learning experiences, the nature of the material used, and or learning environment Snyman and Bloem (2001) in Engelbrecht and Green, (2001:172).

Definitions of visual impairment and blindness may differ from country to country. Whatever the criteria, Write (1983:56) points out that great caution must be used in inferring what a person can or cannot do. This is simply because there is not a one-to-one relationship between visual acuity and visual behaviour. The term "visually impaired" for the purposes of this study is considered very broad. As Snyman and Bloem (2001) in Engelbrecht & Green (2001: 172) assert visual impairment is a generic term, which includes a wide range of visual problems, such as deficits in acuity, visual field, and eye movement or colour perception.

Visual impairment in this study refers to the partial loss of vision due to congenital conditions, disease or injury. Visual disability in this study is the inability or failure of the society to cater for people with visual impairments. This study will include all learners who are regarded as partially sighted, visually disabled, visually limited or legally blind. The latter classifications will be referred to as learners with visual impairment.

1.4 CAUSES OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

According to Wilson (2003:113), vision problems vary considerably ranging from relatively minor to remediable conditions or even to total blindness. These variations thus have different implications for a child's development and academic performance. The time of the onset also differs and plays a major role in the child's ability to adapt socially and psychologically, as well as to achieve academic success. Vision problems can be related to vision acuity and/ peripheral field vision (Wilson, 2003:113).

Visual acuity refers to the distance at which a person can discriminate an object in relation to the distance at which a person with average visual acuity (20/20) can discriminate the same object. An individual with 20/90 visual acuity, for example, would be able to see accurately up to only 6 metres what a person with an average visual acuity could see as far as 27 metres (Wilson, 2003:113-114).

Visual impairments, according to Chapman & Stone (1989) in Poon-McBrayer & Lian, (2002:176), may be congenital or acquired. The following are congenital visual impairments: albinism (resulting in photophobia due to lack of pigmentation in eyes, skin and hair) cataract, glaucoma (abnormal widening and enlargement of the eyeball due to pressure), severe myopia associated with retinal detachment, lesions of the cornea, and microphthalmos (abnormally small eyeball).

DPSA (2001:26) states that albinism per se is not a disability, although most people with albinism identify with other people with disabilities due to the nature of discrimination they experience.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that the incidence of visual impairment is between 1% and 1,5% in developing countries and nine out of ten of those who are have a visual disability live in developing countries. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for an estimated 16 -18 million visually disabled people whilst South Africa has 557, 000. Statistics South Africa, (Census 2001:40) states that there are 577,096 people with visual impairment in South Africa and 86,893 in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1. To elicit the experiences and feelings of the learners, educators and parents about inclusion of learners with visual impairment into mainstream schools.
2. To explore the challenges or barriers relating to the inclusion of learners with visual impairment.
3. To explore the kind of support required in inclusion of learners with visual impairment.

1.6 VALUE OF THE STUDY

With the study the researcher hopes to contribute to literature on inclusive education particularly of learners with visual impairment. The information obtained from the study will in future be of benefit to parents who wish to have their children admitted to mainstream schools.

Information will illustrate the views and feelings of learners with regard to special and mainstream education.

The study depicts how the educators dealt with the learners with visual impairment and the support required thereof.

Integration and co-ordination between the various government departments in approaching inclusive education will be encouraged.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The research method chosen is a qualitative study, based on combination of semi-structured interviews together with focus groups. The reason for using qualitative interviews is mainly due to a limited amount of information available on this topic and research is being carried out using participants' subjective opinions in the hope of identifying new concepts, which may lead to hypothesis formulation, for further research (Grinnell, 1998:193).

The rationale for using focus groups is that focus groups are ideal for exploring people's experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns. The group is 'focused' in that it involves some kind of collective activity - such as viewing a video or simply debating a set of questions (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999:4).

Interviews and focus groups for educators were conducted at their respective schools. For parents and learners, interviews were conducted at their homes and the focus groups at a central community hall.

Qualitative data produces a mass of detailed information in the form of words and this data must be subjected to forms of analysis that will make sense out of these words (Marlow, 1998:265). The information gathered from the respondents has been divided into categories, similarities and dissimilarities and common themes. Findings and recommendations were made from the data.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH

Chapter Two presents the review of related literature.

Chapter Three explains the methodology used in collecting data and the ethical issues considered relevant to the study.

Chapter Four presents the results, analysis and the findings of the research and the findings in respect of the objectives of the study. Chapter Five gives the researcher's recommendations and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of the literature on inclusive education. An attempt is made to examine various concepts and their relevance to the research study. The reason for selecting these concepts in particular is that they provide a basic and necessary background to the research. Because of their complexity, such concepts have in the past been confused and manipulated as they could easily mean different things to different people. Furthermore, some concepts have had a different meaning in the past compared to the current context. These concepts are social exclusion and inclusion, mainstreaming or integration and inclusive education, community, community development and participation and their relevance in the South African situation. An analysis of how education policies influence the broader social context will be made. (The White Paper on Education and Training (WPET) (1995), and WP6, 2001, South African Schools Act, 1996). The various barriers to inclusion of learners with disabilities will be examined and particular attention will be paid to barriers experienced by learners with visual impairment and ways and means of dealing with those barriers.

2.2 SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion is often defined in terms of being "the opposite to social exclusion.' Manifestations of social exclusion and how it is understood vary across countries, resulting in different visions of social inclusion. Processes of inclusion and exclusion are therefore conjoined (Kilner, (2003:1) and Carrim, (2002:3). Walker and Walker (1997) in Saloojee, (2003:2) define social exclusion as a dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from social, economic, political or cultural systems that determine the social integration of a person in a society. On the other hand, Kilner, (2003:1) defines social exclusion as being cut off from the mainstream of society and adds that people can be cut off for many reasons for example, disability, lack of skills or knowledge, other people's attitudes, or lack of community resources.

The definitions of social exclusion by Walker & Walker and Kilner seem to share similar sentiments with those expressed by the (INDS) (1997) regarding the exclusion of people with disabilities.

The INDS, (1997:2) points out that people with disabilities have been excluded as a result of political, economic inequalities, social attitudes and discriminatory and weak legislative framework. Social exclusion therefore is the inability of an individual to participate in political, economic and social functioning of the society in which one lives.

Saloojee, (2003:1) claims that the term social exclusion can be traced back to France in the early 1970s as a response to problems of sustaining adequate living conditions for those left behind by economic growth. He adds that by 1989 the European Community began to link social exclusion with inadequate realisation of social rights. Before 1994, social exclusion in South Africa was practised racially by the apartheid regime. Apartheid is known for having been a system based on white supremacy, racism and the oppression of the majority of black South Africans. It ensured the abject segregation of people defined racially by apartheid regime (Carrim, 2002:4).

Segregation included separate and unequal provision of housing, schooling, social amenities, economic and political oppression and the exploitation of the majority of black people (Carrim, 2002:5). It is, however, important to note that the critiques of the anti-apartheid movement, have pointed to the inclusionary and exclusionary effects and intents of apartheid. In such critiques, several trends emerged. Some critiques pointed to the injustices of racism (Tutu, 1989), others to the connection between race and class in the development of apartheid capitalism (Wolpe, 1989), and others to the interrelations between race and gender (Cock, 1980), race, class and gender (Cock, 1980) or regional location, gender, race and class (Bozzoli, 1991) (Carrim, 2002:5-6).

In these ways, Carrim, points out, such critiques of apartheid also implied that racism could not be understood on its own, but should be seen as interlocking with other forms of exploitation and oppression. Race nevertheless remained the dominant articulating principle with the apartheid constructions and anti-apartheid struggles (Carrim, 2002:5-6).

Social exclusion thus comprises not only material deprivation, but also more widely the denial of opportunities to participate meaningfully in social life. Social exclusion is unacceptable in human terms and carries risks in the long term for a society's social cohesion and well being. It is multidimensional in nature resulting in segregation and disadvantage.

Social inclusion according to Saloojee,(2003:3) is about respect for differences and removal of barriers to effective and equitable participation in all spheres of public life. He adds that it is about engaging in inclusive practices, continuous evaluations of institutional laws, policies and practices to ensure that they promote social inclusion. For Saloojee (2003) therefore, social inclusion is an ongoing process that requires constant monitoring and evaluation. Saloojee (2003:3) recognises and acknowledges that for inclusion to occur there are barriers that need to be removed in order for inclusion to materialise. He falls short, however, on elaborating on these kinds of barriers and appears to regard policies as the absolute remedy for social exclusion.

Freiler 2001 in Saloojee, (2003:6) affirms Saloojee's understanding, but goes further by claiming that social inclusion is a process that encourages the development of talents, skills and capacities necessary for children and youth to participate in social and economic mainstream of community life.

Saloojee, (2003:6) asserts that what makes a discourse on social inclusion more compelling than one on exclusion is the following:

- Social inclusion is more than the removal of barriers; it is about the comprehensive vision that includes all. In the South African context, for example, one of the principles of the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:10) contends that social welfare services and programmes will promote non-discrimination, tolerance, mutual respect, diversity and the inclusion of all groups in society. The White Paper for Social Welfare therefore takes cognisance of the fact that there are certain sectors of the population who have experienced and are still experiencing further discrimination. The INDS, (1997:8) corroborates Saloojee's' view by spelling out its vision as being "a society for all."
- Social inclusion is proactive. It is not about passive protection of rights. It is about active intervention to promote rights and it confers responsibility on the state to adopt policies that will ensure social inclusion of all members of society. Legislation that came into being since 1994 in South Africa can be regarded as proactive. This legislation include the RDP/WP 1994, Constitution of 1996, the INDS, 1997, White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997, Employment Equity Act, the latest being the Education White Paper 6,2001. The active participation of people with disabilities in the drawing up of the INDS (1997) is another illustration of progressive thinking.
- Social inclusion, by virtue of the fact that it is both process and outcome oriented, can hold governments and institutions accountable for their policies. The yardstick by which to measure a good government therefore becomes the extent to which it advances the well-being of the most vulnerable and marginalised in society (Saloojee, 2002).

Social inclusion, therefore, is not an act or process of homogenisation; it is about fostering ways of mutual recognition and despising actions that entrench social distance. Bach (2002:ix) puts it more clearly when he notes that "social inclusion extends beyond bringing the 'outsiders' in, or notions of the periphery versus the centre. The author suggests that social inclusion is about closing physical, social, and economic distances separating people, rather than only eliminating boundaries or barriers between 'them and us'.

It is thus about ensuring all the people are able to participate, as valued, respected and contributing members of society. Inclusion in education can thus be viewed as being based on the notion of a social inclusive nation.

Carrim, (2002:2) proclaims that the term "inclusion" has been used in the context of "special education" under apartheid. In the post apartheid era the general educational usage of inclusion in South African educational context has been to argue for the inclusion of the majority of "black" South Africans, including people with disabilities, in equitable provisions within a non-racial and democratic educational system. Barton (1999) in Carrim, (2002:3), states that it implies change in the values, priorities and policies that support and perpetuate practices of exclusion and discrimination.

2.3 EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICA UNDER APARTHEID

Among people with disabilities there are categories, which historically experienced and continue to experience comparatively higher levels of discrimination and exclusion. The INDS (1997:4) identifies children with disabilities, particularly black disabled children, as being amongst the sectors that still experience discrimination. It adds that society still undervalues the capabilities of children with disabilities and regards them as a "problem" to be dealt with separately from other children's issues.

Such children are also less likely than their siblings to attend school and to experience situations where they have to solve problems or to contribute to household chores. The result is that they grow up to become disempowered adults, unable to take decisions, solve problems or take initiative, hence the high levels of unemployment of adults of people with disabilities (INDS, 1997:4). Their self-image is compromised and the preconceived view is that they cannot contribute meaningfully in society.

It has been common for children with disabilities to be sent away to institutions for care or special schooling resulting in the separation from their family, friends and peers (INDS, 1997:5). Dovey & Graffam (1987:159) deplore the separation of people with disabilities. They point out that involvement with "special" services appears to provide individuals with few necessary skills, poor prospects for the future, poor self-confidence, low self-esteem and a pattern of dependent behaviour, which is hard to break.

The destruction of apartheid in the field of education of black people is evident. Special needs education is a sector where the ravages of apartheid remain most evident. Here the segregation of learners on the basis of race was extended to incorporate segregation on the basis of disability.

Apartheid schools were thus organised according to two segregating criteria, race and disability. In accordance with apartheid policy, schools that accommodated white learners with disabilities were extremely well -resourced, whilst the few schools for black learners with disabilities were systematically under-resourced (WP6, 2001:9).

Due to these discrepancies in the provision of services the non-governmental organisations, churches and advocacy groups had to come up with robust and innovative strategies to counter the limitations of the system. As in other parts of the world the response to a diversity of need in South Africa was shaped by what has been termed a type of 'divine displeasure' which led to the differences being regarded with superstition (Naicker, 2004:4). This is particularly true in the case of disabilities. However Du Toit (1996) in Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen, (1996:4) argues that one aspect that distinguishes the development of special education in South Africa from that of other countries is the extent of philosophical and political influences.

In South Africa, the first schools for learners with disabilities were church and missionary schools set up for learners with visual disabilities with no state funding. These schools were divided along racial lines. Black learners with special needs were thus hard hit by this segregation resulting in their quality of education being jeopardised. Du Toit (1996) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:9) adds that the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 aggravated the situation resulting in separate education for each of the various ethnic groups. The consequence of this action was a complex organisational structure consisting of 17 different education systems running parallel to one another, all under the central government control. The area of 'special needs' was doubly fragmented- on the one hand, by legislation and policy, enforcing separation along racial lines and on the other, by a separation between 'ordinary' learners in the mainstream and learners with 'special needs' (NCESNET/NCESS, 1997:11).

An overview of the development of education support services in South Africa reflects similar inequalities. The introduction of psychological services in the mid-sixties for white schools was a further insult to the black learners. These services were quite extensive and included specialised services interventions and assistance on a number of levels. Although some support services were devised by the other racially segregated departments, these were generally inadequate in meeting the needs which existed and often relied on insufficient resources and provisioning (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:32-33).

In its analysis of the education support services, the NCSNET/NCESS (1997:33) points out that services demonstrate three important directions. Firstly, those support services, which did exist, operated along racial lines with huge inequalities manifested in the provision to white and black learners, particularly African learners. Secondly, the development and administration of intelligence tests contributed to the institutionalisation of 'special' education through their use of assessing intelligence and learning potential in learners. Based on the outcome of these tests, learners were categorised and labelled for placement in special school programmes, classes and schools. The third trend, which defines the nature of the development of support services in South Africa, is the large-scale adherence, particularly after 1948, to a medical model for diagnosis and treatment of learners with 'special needs'.

Historically, South Africa, like the rest of the world, regarded the areas of "special needs" or specialised education and support services as an "add on" and gave them marginal consideration in the administration of education (NCSNET/NCESS report, 1997:1).

As a result of this attitude, special needs education never received the attention it deserved. The historical assumption is that there are two distinct categories of learners in South Africa, those learners who form the majority with "ordinary needs" and the smaller minority of learners with "special needs" who require support or specialised programmes in order to engage in some form of learning process (NCSNET/ NCESS report: 1997:1).

Naicker (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:13) strongly believes that it is important to understand the discourses that have been influential in informing special education practices in South Africa. He asserts that discourses serve particular interests. Furthermore he claims that there is an increasing body of knowledge that supports the notion that medical and psychological perspectives have been influential in shaping special education.

Naicker (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999) makes use of Fulcher's (1989) four main discourses, which have constructed the field of special education.

- Medical discourse

According to this discourse, impairment is linked with disability. For example, in schools for the "visually disabled" learners are constructed as disabled and the disability is conceived of as an objective attribute, not as a social construct. In other words, such a person is excluded from mainstream social and economic life because of a disability that is thought to be a natural and irremediable characteristic of the person (Naicker (1999), in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:13)

- Charity discourse

Naicker (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:13) states that much of special education in South Africa has to do with benevolent humanitarianism and recipients of special education are viewed as in need of assistance, as objects of pity and eternally dependent on others; hence they are in need of institutional care. He goes on to say that little is said about the social workers, therapists, nurses, educators and other professionals who benefit from this type of labelling. He raises a question as to who benefits from this categorisation or isolation. He claims that what this promotes is that people in authority (mainly non-disabled persons) are always decision-makers.

He concludes by saying the voice of the persons with disabilities is totally erased from the production of knowledge central to disability Naicker (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:13-14).

- Lay discourse

Naicker states that lay discourse relates to prejudice, hate, ignorance, fear and even paternalistic tendencies. He adds that much of this has to do with isolation of people who deviate from the normal physical appearances. For example, in some communities, people with disabilities are viewed as a curse or a punishment from God and, as such, are isolated together with their families.

- Rights discourse

The rights discourse is committed to extending full citizenship to all people. It stresses equal opportunity, self-reliance, and independence (wants rather than needs) Naicker, in Engelbrecht at al (1999: 14). Naicker concludes by asserting that the current practices in special education, therefore, are a product of history, decades of institutionalised practices, which would require a major paradigm shift.

2.4 INCLUSION IN POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

The advent of democracy in 1994 has resulted in South Africa being influenced by international policies especially regarding education. In this regard, it could be argued that the post apartheid South Africa is one that attempts to redefine the exclusionary constructions of apartheid and craft these in ways that are more inclusive of all the people of South Africa. Engelbrecht et al, (1999: viii) assert that influence towards international trends is depicted in national education policy developments and both South African and international perspectives on inclusion are closely related to wider social concerns about human rights.

In recent years, inclusion has risen to prominence on the international educational agenda. Inclusion has arisen from two interrelated but nonetheless distinct processes. These processes are reconstructions of notions of disability, particularly as they relate to human rights and social justice and wide social, economic and educational developments which are not tied specifically to disability but are much more concerned with the role of education in contemporary societies (Dyson and Forlin, (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:24) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 2003:1).

Although the inclusive education movement is now an international phenomenon, it has its origins in the relatively rich countries that have already both extensive and sophisticated regular and special education systems. In the 1960's a number of Scandinavian countries shifted the emphasis of their educational provision for learners with disabilities from separate special schooling to what came to be known as "integration". They were followed in the 1970's by the USA and the United Kingdom (Dyson and Forlin, (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:25).

South Africa, after 1994, therefore had to become part and parcel of the global village through ensuring that all its citizens are recognised, participate and become part of the activities that promote social justice and respect the dignity of all its citizens.

South Africa became a signatory of the Salamanca Statement, which is under the auspices of UNESCO. Ainscow (1999:74) declares that the move towards inclusion is a strong feature of the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education agreed by representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations in 1994. The Salamanca Statement is regarded as one of the most significant international documents that have ever appeared in the special needs field and has been a basic reference for debates and projects. The Statement argues that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are "the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all." The Statement explicitly stipulates that inclusion is a right, a right that appears to be universal, seeing the development of inclusive schools as part of the creation of an inclusive society (Ainsow, 1999:74 and Dyson and Forlin, (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:32).

The latter statement thus can be construed as viewing inclusion extending beyond just overhauling the education system for learners with disabilities but also stretching to a wide range of disadvantaged and marginalised groups who may have had little or no access to education. The foundation therefore of a society that embraces diversity and spurns prejudice is inclusive education.

Proponents of inclusion argue that it is cost efficient. Rusteimer, (2004:4) affirms this notion by asserting that international work by the World Bank has shown that it is far more expensive to operate dual systems of ordinary and special education than it is to operate a single education system.

Rusteimer,(2004:4)The author adds that the real problem lies with the historical investment in separate segregated systems of "special" schools, the lack of political will to make inclusive education available to all and the uncertainties of some parents that inclusion will benefit their children. The author however cautions that this of course does not necessarily mean that inclusive education is cost free, time, energy and skills of regular educators are some of the principal resources.

The (WP6, 2001:25) also asserts that in the long run the inclusion of all learners will also lead to a reduction in the government fiscal burden. In addition through inclusive education and training system the number of productive citizens would be increased compared to those who are dependent on the state for social security grants.

2.5 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAINSTREAMING OR INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

There is a tendency to confuse inclusion with mainstreaming or integration and it is imperative therefore to make a clear distinction between these terms. Mainstreaming, which is sometimes referred to as integration, suggests that education must help the one who does not fit in to "eventually fit in." It focuses on the changes that need to take place in learners and on giving them extra support so that they can be integrated into the 'normal' classroom routine. Inclusion is about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities. Furthermore, inclusion is about supporting learners, educators and the system as a whole so that diverse learning needs are met, paying particular attention in the removal of barriers in the system (WP6, (2001:17), Goduka and Swadener, (1999:156) and Engelbrecht et al, (1999:19).

Lindqvist, (2003) UN Special Rapporteur in Rawal,(2003:1) of Commission for Social Development on Disability, in Rawal, (2003:1) argues explicitly, "It is not the education system that has a right to certain types of children. It is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children".

In addition, he highlights the need for support services, which ensure ranges of options for the provision of education. The author explains that the support will include educators with specialised competencies, parents, community, and non-governmental organisations.

Inclusion, therefore, is not about recognising the differences in learners and dealing with them in a way that will prejudice a certain segment of the learners. The definition takes into cognisance the realisation of an inclusive education system takes place through collaboration of stakeholders due to its challenging nature. Joibari, (2003:1) sums it well by claiming "inclusion is not a privilege, it is the natural consequence of a humane society."

Naicker (in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:20) highlights the complex diversified conditions in the nine provinces in South Africa, which pose particular challenges to an inclusive education system. He identifies differences in terms of fiscal allocation previously inherited, disparate service provision, rural urban disparities and infrastructure as presenting major impediments to a uniform system of inclusive education. The complex diversified conditions identified by Naicker (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:20) are thus indicative of the magnitude of challenges that will face the various provinces in implementing inclusive education. As a result of such disparities, an inclusive system could take various forms and be characterised very differently in South Africa.

In developing countries, Naicker 1999 in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:21) points out that there may be significant numbers of learners who may have no access to effective education. Learners with disability may be among those who are thus excluded from education, but need not be the largest group. Given that such countries may have insufficient funds to create a large infrastructure of special schools or establish special projects and provision of other excluded groups, the "inclusive school" may be the only viable means of extending education to the population as a whole.

(Dyson & Forlin (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:25) conclude by arguing that it is probably why South Africa, which is regarded as a developing country, has decided on a comprehensive definition of inclusion, which extends far beyond the issue of provision for learners with disabilities.

2.6 TRANSFORMING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

One of the key tasks facing the new government was to address the inequalities of the past. These inequalities were deeply entrenched in society and in most institutions, mainly on the basis of race (Naicker, 2004:3). The publication of the White Paper on the RDP could be viewed "as an important step in establishing a dialogue in which all South Africans will take part to build a better society and economy for all." (RDP/WP, 1994:4).

According to the RDP/ WP, (1994:7), "the RDP is a policy framework that seeks to mobilise all people and the country's resources toward the final eradication of the results of apartheid. Its goals are to build a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future and represent a vision for the fundamental transformation of South Africa by:

- Developing strong and stable democratic institutions
- Ensuring representativity and participation
- Creating a sustainable and environmentally friendly growth and development path (RDP/WP, 1994:7).

The RDP/ WP (1994) could be viewed as having laid down general parameters in terms of which reconstruction and development ought to occur. Any development or development support, therefore, would have to be clearly aligned and be contextualised and modified along the RDP/WP (1994).

A number of policies were promulgated after the RDP White Paper particularly for the transformation of education. Educational change in South Africa has always been considered as a vehicle in bringing about transformation in the broader society. Kallaway, Kruss, Gari and Fataar, (1997:26) affirm this notion by pointing out that "equality of education on its own is the key to the achievement of equality in the social order." They go on to say that "in the debate about equality the assumption is frequently made that changes in the education system, including the equalising of access, will have transformative effects on the economy and will produce systematic levelling effects on class, race, gender and other forms of inequalities."

The Report on Poverty and Inequality in South Africa, (1998:5) argues that there is a very strong correlation between level of education and standard of living. The report further outlines that the poverty rate among people with no education is 69%, compared with 54% among people with primary education, 24% among those with secondary education, and 3% among those with tertiary education. Transformation in education therefore is perceived, as leading to economic growth and social prosperity which will be brought about by skilled human resources.

The WPET (2001:1) puts it explicitly by asserting that "education is pivotal to economic prosperity assisting South Africans, personally and collectively to escape the "poverty trap" characterised by many of the communities. It is against this background that the White Paper on Education and Training, 1995 (WPET) was promulgated, forming a basis of all the major changes that were to be undergone by the education system.

The WPET (1995:5) established itself within in the context of the RDP philosophy. In his introductory message, the then Minister of Education, S.M. Bhengu stated "this policy document describes the process of transformation in education and training which will bring into being a system serving all our people, in new democracy and RDP." One of the key areas of transformation identified by the WPET (1995:15-16) is special needs education and the support services.

WPET, (1995:7) states that the reconstruction of education and indeed the reconstruction of South Africa after apartheid can only find proper expression if the state commits itself, notwithstanding the demands of other necessary facets of education, to placing all South Africa's children of school going age into school within the next few years. The WPET (1995: 8-9:) underscores the necessity of launching a multi-dimensional education reconstruction programme, which marks a radical departure from the ethos of apartheid education.

The WPET (1995) adds state education policy in pursuit of such reconstruction would be based on the values of equality, non-sexism, non-racism and redress.

The WP6,(2001:2) states that education is a sector where the ravages of apartheid remain most evident. Learners with disability experienced great difficulty in gaining access to education due to the fact that very few special schools existed and they were limited to admitting learners according to rigidly applied categories. Learners who experienced learning difficulties as a result of severe poverty did not qualify for education support. The categorisation system allowed only those learners with organic, medical disabilities access to support programmes. The impact of this policy was that only 20% of learners with disabilities were accommodated in special schools (WP6, 2001:5).

Due to the low percentage of learners with disability who managed to access education one can imagine therefore that the bulk of children with disabilities were left without education, resulting in the inability of people with disabilities to access the right of entry to the workplace, economic development and the political sphere. It is therefore against this background that the WP6 (2001:6) encourages that the Ministry of Education support this direction and sees the establishment of an inclusive education and training system as a cornerstone of an integrated and caring society. A 20 years time frame is envisaged for the implementation of the inclusive education and training system.

The Minister of Education therefore appointed NCSNET and the (NCESS) to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education and training in South Africa. The investigation further focused on the challenge to minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development in order to promote effective learning and development. All aspects of education and all levels (early childhood development, general education and training, further education and training, higher education and adult education) were included in the scope of the NCSNET/NCESS.

2.7 BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The principle of involving key stakeholders in the investigation into aspects of special needs and support services was considered through a participatory approach. There are a number of barriers that have been identified by the NCSNET & NCESS, which manifested themselves in various ways.

The following barriers to the learning and development in South Africa have been identified (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:12).

2.7.1 Poverty

About 600 million people living in developing countries are people with disabilities. The vast majority of these people with disabilities are not just poor but among the poorest of the poor. Poverty, disability and impairment are locked together (Durham, 2004:1)

The NCSNET/NCESS report, (1997:13) states unemployment and other economic inequalities as direct causes of poverty. The distribution of income and wealth in South Africa is among the most unequal in the world (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2000:x). The poverty rate is distributed unevenly throughout the various provinces. Poverty is not confined to one racial group but is concentrated among blacks (Report on poverty and inequality in South Africa 1998:4). The Eastern Cape is the second poorest province after Limpopo with predominantly black people, and the lowest poverty rate in Gauteng and Western Cape with the highest proportion of white people (Daily Dispatch, 6 December 2004:1).

As a result of poverty families are unable to meet the basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Learners living under such conditions are subject to increased emotional stress, which adversely affects learning and development (NCSNET/NCESS report 1997:13). Poverty results in negative consequences like no power to influence change, high levels of anxiety and emotional stress (Report on poverty and inequality in South Africa, 1998:5). Poverty stricken communities are also poorly resourced communities, which are frequently characterised by a lack of electricity, toilets, and piped water. Limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil/teacher ratios, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning materials are also typical of such communities. Such factors raise the likelihood of breakdown and the inability of the system to sustain effective teaching and learning (NCSNET/NCESS report, 1997).

Poor people face a greater risk of impairment or disability. In addition, the occurrence of disability in a family often places heavy demands thrusting it deeper into poverty. According to McClain (2004:2), people with disabilities are disproportionately among the poorest of the poor and more likely than able-bodied peers to be uneducated, unemployed or under-employed. This means not only that there is a higher proportion of people with disabilities amongst the very poor, but also that there is an increase in families living at the poverty level as a result of disability. A Household Survey in 1995 confirms that large numbers of people with disabilities live in areas where infrastructure for the provision of basic services is at its weakest (INDS, 1997:2).

The RDP White Paper, (1994) acknowledges the need for the upgrading of the country's infrastructure and commits the government to providing access to modern and effective services, electricity, water, telecommunications, transport, health, education and training for all the people. It states that these programmes will both meet basic needs and open up previously suppressed economic and human potential in urban and rural areas.

Research into education of visually impaired children in Uganda reveals that their situation is similar to South Africa's. The study shows that there is a strong link between poverty and disability (McCall, 2004:8).

In attempt to deal with the scourge of poverty the Eastern Cape government intends increasing the number of feeding days in the Nutrition Programme in schools each week from three to five. Attempts are also underway to integrate the initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty. The Department of Education is also looking at ways to empower the poor by using their community gardens and food projects in the nutrition scheme (Daily Dispatch, 1 December2004: 4).

2.7.2 Attitudes or psychological barriers

Negative attitudes toward different learners manifest themselves in the labelling of learners and learners with disabilities have fallen victim to this unacceptable behaviour (NCSNET/NCESS report, 1997:15). People with albinism have for example been given derogatory names and been assumed that they vanish during their teens (DPSA, 2001:13). Kwaaiman, (2004) affirms this by claiming that people with albinism are always treated with hostility and resentment consequently most of them would leave their communities and go elsewhere, hence the myth that they do not die, they vanish. They would in most instances be called "inkawu" meaning, monkey and never called by their names. (Kwaaiman, 2004).

Dovey and Graffam, (1987:165) assert that negative attitudes create perhaps the greatest barrier to successful social inclusion. They argue that for many people with disabilities their own internalised attitudes about disability and their experiences in a rejecting world have fostered strong negative feelings about themselves.

Forteza (2004:1) highlights the importance of the self-concept of those with visual impairment. The author adds that the manner in which a child with visual impairment learns to view himself or herself has a tremendous impact on his or her future ambitions, accomplishments and personal happiness. The author further highlights the risks that the adolescent stage of life can represent for young people who are visually impaired. He states that throughout their lives, people with a visual impairment have to deal with the challenge of how to reach a balance between the need for help and the need to regard themselves as competent, independent people and for others also to see them as such.

Research reveals that the isolation and marginalisation of the child is aggravated when he or she is unable to enter into the education system. The report states that very often educators fear the inclusion of a child with a disability in their class and respond negatively to their attendance. For learners with disabilities, fear and lack of awareness about disability among some parents and educators remains a significant barrier (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:15).

Coates and Mittler (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:71) and Yuen and Westwood (2001:73) argue that international research suggests that educators with little experience of people with disabilities are likely to have negative attitudes to inclusion. The inclusion of such learners thus becomes an issue related to the educators' attitudes and beliefs. Swart & Pettipher (1999) in Engelbrecht & Green, (2001:41) suggest that educators need to think about and verbalise the assumptions they make about learners, differences and learning. Educators thus need to develop a critical understanding of common stereotypes and prejudices related to disability and how these have influenced their own attitudes. If negative attitudes are not acknowledged and dealt with accordingly the outcomes could be disastrous to the desired results. If these are verbalised with other educators, they might get an opportunity not only to focus on the negative but on the positive as well (Swart & Pettipher, (1999) in Engelbrecht & Green, (2001:41).

An example of negative attitudes towards learners with visual impairment is that of Lukhanyiso Febane who was born with albinism. He decided to leave Ngwenyathi High School after he was allegedly humiliated by other educators and tormented about his inability to see clearly. His impaired vision makes it difficult to see the writing on the blackboard. Despite frequent requests to be allowed to sit closer to the board, his educators ignored him. He says, "This so stressful that I have decided to leave school" (Daily Dispatch, 25 April, 2003:3).

Coleridge (1993) in Goduka, (1999:152) puts it clearly by saying " Every time a person with a disability goes out into the street, he or she has in a sense to start from scratch: the looks, the avoidance, the awkwardness, the prejudice are all there every time. Dealing with these things positively time after time gets very wearying."

Inclusion begins within the family. The attitudes of families are powerful forces that can mean the difference between success and failure at school, especially when the placement is in an integrated setting. There is no longer any doubt that a strong, secure family can do much to prepare a visually impaired child for life in the sighted world (Bishop, 2004:2).

Dovey and Graffam, (1987:102) point out that in a study conducted, educators argue that parental attitudes towards the child and his/her disability and parental child rearing practices are crucial to the child's outlook on life. They add, "parental acceptance of the child appears to be central to the child's ability to perceive him/herself as a person worth." They conclude by stating that positive perception as a result of family attitudes can sustain the self-confidence of a disabled person in the event of social rejection.

The significance of a strong family background are confirmed by Masunga, a woman with a disability who recently won the Shoprite/Checkers Woman of the Year Award. She says that her family background played an important role in shaping her character. She goes on to say that they never told her not to do certain things and this has resulted in her being a go-getter (City Press, 22 August 2004:26). The negative attitudes could hold back people with disabilities from attempting and succeeding in many spheres of society.

2.7.3 Inflexible curriculum

In any education system, the curriculum is either an impediment or a tool to facilitate the development of a more inclusive system (UNESCO, 2003:5). One of the most serious barriers to learning and development can be found within the curriculum itself). Key components of the curriculum include the style and tempo of teaching and learning, what is taught, and the way the classroom is managed and organised (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:16).

WP6,(2001:19) asserts that one of the ways in which learners are prevented from accessing the curriculum is through inadequate provision of materials or equipment they may need for learning to take place. Such barriers often affect learners with disabilities who do not receive the necessary assistive devices, which would equip them to participate in the learning process. For example, learners with visual disability are unable to access the curriculum effectively if appropriate facilities and equipment are not available (boards painted black, or large prints or Braille, depending on the kind of support that particular learner requires).

Within a single education system all learners will have access to quality education via the national curriculum of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). The fundamental aim of OBE is for learners to succeed and school experiences are redefined as preparation for life rather than preparation for more schooling (Spady, 1994:1). The new system, in contrast to the old curriculum, is designed to have the capacity to respond to diversity in learning needs, based on the belief that all learners can learn successfully. All learners are understood to possess unique individual characteristics. The curriculum will have to be adapted to suit learners, rather than have learners fit the curriculum (Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi (1999) in Engelbrecht at al, (1999:76). Furthermore Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht (1999:51) state that the educators' role is to develop their competencies to identify and respond to local needs. The new curriculum therefore offers flexibility to make inclusion a reality.

2.7.4 Language and communication

Further barriers arising from the curriculum are those which result from the medium of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning for many learners takes place through a language, which is not their first language. This not only places these learners at a disadvantage, but it also leads to linguistic difficulties, which contribute to learning breakdown. Such barriers can be particularly destructive for Deaf learners whose first language may be Sign Language (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:17).

2.7.5 Provision of assistive devices

The provision and maintenance of assistive devices within the learning context has varied considerably in the past. Race has been a major determining factor, with distorted provision among the racially segregated education departments. The provision of assistive devices has also been characterised by restrictive costs, lack of knowledge regarding the services and facilities which are available, centralised service delivery and the absence of an integrated strategy for the provision of effective devices and skills (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:30).

The INDS, (1997:29) identifies as particularly problematic the uncoordinated and inappropriate production, supply and maintenance of assistive devices, as well as the high cost of imported devices. While available assistive devices have made a considerable impact on the ability of learners to access the curriculum, many problems relating to the current use of these devices in some contexts have been identified. A study on assistive devices by Disabled People South Africa, Disability Action Research Team and the Health Systems Trust indicated that learners in some specialised schools lacked understanding and knowledge as to choice, availability, cost and maintenance of assistive devices. Learners also argued that assistive devices used were often not suitable for learning contexts, hampering rather than enabling them (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:30).

Attempts to build partnerships with business sector have produced fruitful results for some organisations. An example is the partnership between Game Stores and National Council for the Physically Disabled Persons. Game Stores donates wheelchairs to learners throughout South Africa occasionally (REHAB, 2004:3).

The NCSNET/NCESS (1997) report cautions that it is important to note that assistive devices, however necessary, should not be emphasised in such a way that the necessary accompanying human skills are not developed. These include particular technical, teaching and support skills.

2.7.6 Inaccessible and unsafe built environment

Physical barriers refer to those in the environment such as the architectural-structural and institutional barriers. In many contexts the vast majority of centres of learning are inaccessible to a large number of people with disabilities (Dovey and Graffam, 1987:162). The physical environment of any school including the surrounding terrain, school buildings as well as general considerations of safety and health, are all concerns in this regard. All these are an important aspect to consider in terms of whether they constitute a barrier or opportunity for learning and development (Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi (1999) in Engelbrecht, et al, 1999:73). One of the reasons why people with disabilities do not enjoy equal participation is the issue of physical barriers (INDS 1997:9).

Inaccessibility is particularly evident where centres are physically inaccessible to learners, educators and members of the community with disabilities who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices (NCSNET/NCESS report, 1997:30). The way in which the environment is developed and organised contributes, to a large extent, to the level of independence and equality that people with disabilities enjoy. The South African National Building Regulations, which came into being in 1985 sets out national requirements for an accessible, built environment. Although this was an important development in the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities, these regulations have been extremely badly administered and monitored (INDS, 1997:30).

The WP6 (2001: 28) states that the Ministry will give urgent attention to the creation of a barrier free physical environment. It is acknowledged that the physical environment of most ordinary schools and learning settings is not barrier-free and even where it is the case, accessibility has not been planned. It adds that there will be collaboration with the Department of Public Works.

Dovey and Graffam (1987:163) explain that institutional barriers for them are the existence of separate, segregated services for people with disabilities: special schools, sheltered workshops, and vocational centres for the disabled. They claim that in the research they conducted the people they interviewed felt that reliance on and involvement with special services has in reality meant separation and isolation from wider society. They claim that reliance on special services reinforces the notion of "differentness" and maintain that not providing individuals with positive experiences or necessary skills, tends to make the individual even more reliant on special services.

These views may sound far-fetched but understanding them can go a long way in making life easier for a learner with a visual impairment. The challenge to schools is to develop barrier free teaching and learning environments, which accommodate the diverse needs of the learning population and enable all learners to move around freely. The school could make use of relevant organisations and stakeholders who have the expertise in making the necessary changes (these include people with disabilities themselves).

The safety of the school environment is another important aspect in promoting inclusion. Schools may cause exclusion when they are not able to deal with violence, bullying and abuse between learners, between learners and educators and between the school staff. Parents are not likely to send their children to a school of learning they do not perceive as being safe, and learners and educators cannot be expected to work in such an environment (UNESCO, 2003:22-23).

The RDP, (1994:8) also highlights the importance of peace and security by stating that its promotion involves all people and would build on expanding the national drive for peace and combat the endemic violence to which communities are subjected.

In the WP6, (2001:3) the then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, also alluded to the importance of safety in schools and committed to ensuring that schools become safe places. Theft and vandalism of school property also pose a threat to educators and learners and to the entire schooling process. A number of schools have been targets of criminal elements who have terrorised educators and learners after gaining free and easy access to school premises. The government of the Eastern Cape has embarked on a programme of improving infrastructure in schools, which has resulted in the spending of millions of rands and the creation of job opportunities (Department of Education-Eastern Cape, 2004:8).

Safety is clearly the prime concern when dealing with a visually impaired child. Important considerations include:

- Keeping rooms free of clutter, particularly the floor.
- Making sure that the lighting in corridors and on stairs is adequate
- Marking stairs with white or yellow line
- Marking glass doors to make them more visible
- Marking corners of furniture with white tape (REHAB, 2000:2-3).

2.7.7 Terminology

Terminology reflects the social context in which it is developed and used. It therefore reflects the values and attitudes of that context, and plays an important role in reinforcing values and attitudes that lead to discrimination and segregation of particular groups in society. Terminology can thus be used as a powerful tool to facilitate change and bring about new values, attitudes and social inclusion. People with disabilities are very vulnerable to the misuse of language and terminology. Terminology has an effect of labelling people with disabilities, stereotyping them, discriminating against them, and ultimately creating a culture of non-acceptance (DPSA, 2001:14-15).

Language is therefore based on the discourses or on perspectives of disability, i.e. medical, lay, charity and rights discourse. The move from the medical, charity or lay discourses to the rights discourse should be reflected in the terminology with regard to disability. Here are some of the common terms that are used by people that denigrate people with disabilities and the preferred terms by people with disabilities. These are from the DPSA (2001:14-15). Use “disability” not “handicap”. The word handicap is derived from the phrase “cap in hand” referring to a beggar, and is despised by most people with disabilities. Avoid the use of “cripple” or “crippled”, “deformed”, or “birth defect”. Use “people without disabilities” or “able-bodied” instead of “normal”.

2.7.8 Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services

Support resources remain one of the biggest barriers to inclusive education. The UNESCO, (2003:13) identifies the shortage of resources as the major constraint in countries of the South. The paper adds that lack of schools, or inadequate facilities, lack of educators or qualified staff, lack of learning materials and absence of support could compromise the quality of education.

Particular enabling mechanisms and processes are needed to support diversity and enable the education system, including educators and learners, to minimise, remove and prevent barriers from arising. Where no provision exists for such services, barriers cannot be overcome and needs cannot be met. In some contexts, however, inappropriate or inadequate support services may contribute to learning breakdown or exclusion. For example, where the nature of services is focused on problems in the learner rather than in the system where the barrier may exist - such as poor teaching methods- the intervention may exacerbate the learning breakdown (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:32-33)

2.7.9 Lack of parental recognition and involvement

As in many other countries, parents in South Africa have been at the forefront of the movement towards inclusive education. The focus of this involvement included campaigning both at structural level and at grassroots level. At the structural level, parental representation on national policy forums, e.g. the NCSNET, ensured that the voices of parents were heard. Mobilising parents at grassroots level involved the formation of social movements, e.g. the Parents' Association for Children with Special Educational Needs (Pacsen). Down Syndrome Association South Africa has also been a vociferous advocate in the campaign for inclusive education. Such organisations articulated the need to take seriously the rights of the people with disabilities to inclusive education (Down Syndrome South Africa, 1999:13, Belknap, Roberts and Nyewe, (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, 1999:171).

The South African Schools Act, 1996, Section 5(6) is clear on consultation with the parents on decision-making processes regarding the placement of learners. It states that in determining the placement of a learner experiencing barriers to learning, the head of department and the principal must take into account the rights and wishes of the parents of such a learner.

Although the section above may tend to indicate a high level of parental involvement generally, the current situation regarding their involvement remains far from the ideal. Many educators complain, often justifiably so, that they battle to get parents involved in their child's education or any other school activities. In order to overcome parental apathy, it is necessary to understand the historical reasons. In general, parents have been given little recognition within the education and training system as the primary care givers of their children (Belknap, (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, 1999).

Parents have been allowed little participation in decision-making regarding their children's participation in learning programmes and regarding governance of centres of learning. Perla and O'Donnell, (2002:103) claims that some parents may feel intimidated and anxious about interacting with educators, also if in past the school has only contacted them to discuss problems, the parents may feel justifiably defensive and unwilling to become actively involved. The active involvement of parents and the broader community in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development. More specifically, they are critical components for effective governance of centres of learning and for facilitating community ownership of these facilities (WP6, 2001).



The disempowerment of parents of a child with a disability has been even more marked. Many parents, from the moment of their child's birth have been faced with the intervention of the medical and paramedical personnel. Although this intervention is often necessary and well intended, it has largely ignored the capabilities of the parent as the primary caregiver, therapist and educator of the child. Having to deal with medical personnel can be very intimidating even for empowered parents. Parents who have children accommodated in special schools have been actively encouraged to hand over total responsibility to these schools, particularly those special schools that provided boarding facilities (Belknap et al (1999), in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:174).

Jernigan, (1997:1) states that the family is the foundation for everything and educators cannot be the substitutes for families in the life of their children, but rather must help and strengthen them as partners. He adds that It is always important to keep in mind how much a visual impairment in a child disrupts the structure of families, evoking feelings of guilt that are sometimes hidden by family members. Parents want to be listened to and their anxieties allayed. Frequently the tendency has been that some professionals bombard the parents with technical baggage that focuses much more on the impairment than on the child (Jernigan, (1997:7) and Siaulys, 1997:4).

Therefore, parents need to be carefully counselled about the children's rights issues, what inclusive education means, how it might work in different contexts, and what commitment they would need to make in partnership with the school (Belknap et al 1999, in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:174). Jernigan (1997:6) claims that since illiterate or poorly educated parents are often shy, or insecure, they end up leaving a very important role to educators who in turn, conscious of a lack of parents' preparation, tend to assume a complete role.

Orientation and mobility specialists Perla and O'Donnell (2002:103) argue that the active involvement of parents of learner with visual impairment is very crucial. They state ideally, concepts and skills learned in mobility lessons become part of everyday life and are transferred to a variety of settings. They contend, however, that it is not always the case. According to Perla and O'Donnell (2002:103), learners often do not apply at home the mobility skills they learn at school and the skills tend to deteriorate if they are not consistently used. They suggest that an effective strategy to deal with this hurdle is to reach out to families to encourage parental involvement in reinforcing orientation and mobility. The key to creating an ongoing, positive relationship is to develop a plan at the beginning of the school year to involve parents on a regular basis. Coupling orientation with mobility training, children are thus taught to move about their environment with self-reliance and purposefully (Perla and O'Donnell 2002:105).

It is essential therefore that parents and teachers share their aims concerning the learner and jointly set educational goals. The educator and the parents need to have a close interaction in order to know each other better, but most importantly for the educator to understand the learner.

Jernigan, (1997:1) cautions that if partnership is to be real, certain conditions must exist as prerequisites. He states that partners must be equals and must be accepted as such by each other. The author suggests that if these basics are absent, no partnership is possible, and any talk contrary is meaningless rhetoric.

2.7.10 Lack of human resource development strategies

The Poverty and Inequality in South Africa Report (1998: 18) argues that South Africa has one of the poorest human resource development indices in the world, in terms of both the skill levels of the workforce and resources spent on training. The Report adds that this could be attributed to the fact that development of educators, service providers and other human resources is often fragmented and unsustainable. Absence of ongoing in-service training of educators, in particular, often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem and lack of innovative practices in the classroom. This may result in resistance and harmful attitudes towards those learners who experience learning breakdown or towards particular enabling mechanisms (NCSNET/NCESS report, 1997:19).

Lack of teachers prepared to provide quality inclusive teaching to these learners and the limitation of existing support structures both impacts on inclusion. The result, they add, has been that in response, mainstream teachers see inclusive education as being foisted upon them and they have raised many concerns regarding the implementation of inclusive education (Eloff, Engelbrecht and Swart, 2000:2).

The barriers identified above are evidence that the move towards inclusion is not only challenging but a daunting one due to the magnitude and complexity the day to day realities which the education system has to take into account and overcome. Implementing inclusive education is possible but it is not going to be easy. Nevertheless these barriers cannot be regarded as an excuse for not implementing inclusion. UNESCO (2003:21) cautions that there are no quick-fix solutions or cookbook recipes as to how to go about educational change. However, there are some processes that might facilitate the development of more inclusive education systems.

Karangwa (2003:4) argues that it is sometimes easy to point a finger at the economy, lack of resources and overcrowded classrooms as reasons why it would be difficult to include marginalised groups in education, but some of the poorest areas in Africa have managed to overcome these challenging barriers and serve as examples. She makes reference to an initiative in Rwanda where a committee was established to generate income for the inclusion of learners with visual impairment. She asserts that the committee consisted of religious leaders, local community, parliamentarians, and parents, educators and learners who mobilised funds through charity walks, plays, and dances by pupils. She claims that eight months later a resource room for the visually impaired, and a reading room was opened and volunteers secured (Karangwa, 2003:4).

The examples of barriers mentioned above is indicative of the complexity of the day-to-day realities, which education systems have to take into account. Stainback and Stainback (1990:17) corroborate this sentiment by asserting that , “saying inclusive education can be done, is not the same as saying it will be easy”. They add that segregation has been practised for centuries and there are entrenched attitudes, and educational structures that work against achieving full inclusion of all students on a widespread basis.

2.8 GENDER, HIV/AIDS AND DISABILITY

Traustadottir (2004:1) states that people with disabilities have historically been given little or no attention by both disability studies and feminist scholarship. The author adds that almost all research on people with disabilities seems to have assumed irrelevance of gender as well as other social dimensions such as race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Asch & Fine (1988:3) point out that having a disability presumably overshadows other dimensions of social experience; thereby disability is conceived as the 'master status' for people with disabilities. Disability studies in the past have thus lost sight of exploring the influence of gender in the lives of men and women. Traustadottir (2004:1) adds that the field has not yet recognised the combined discrimination of gender and disability experienced by women who have disabilities, and policies and practices in the field have not been designed to meet their specific needs.

In addition to being ignored by those concerned with disability, women with disabilities have been ignored by the feminist movement. Feminists with disabilities have been critical of the feminist scholars for disregarding the experiences of women with disabilities from feminist analysis (Fine & Asch, 1988:3). Feminist scholars have excluded women with disabilities although they have attempted to explore female experience based on race, class, sexual orientation, and other social dimensions. This exclusion, according to Asch and Fine (1988:4), is indicative of the relegation of women with disabilities by feminist scholars, who in their opinion are joining men in this regard.

Traustadottir (2004:2) points out that the past decade has been characterised by vigorous writing, mostly by women with disabilities writing about themselves and a substantial part consists of their personal accounts of being female and having a disability. Some speak out in anger and bitterness of isolation, despair, poverty and powerlessness, while others celebrate achievement, strength, happiness and fulfilment despite their struggles. The experiences of being a woman with a disability are captured in a comment by Hendrietta Bogopane who is a partially sighted activist and parliamentarian. In Rowland (2004:82) she says, "I have gone through life with lots of problems, lots of challenges and as I was growing up I had many why's and why not's. Why should I be in a special school?"

Much of the scholarly writing has been devoted to identifying the barriers women with disabilities face in today's society and has documented that they fare less well, than both men with disabilities and non-disabled women, in education and employment in receiving economic security and social support and in their access to sexuality and intimacy. Women with disabilities are not seen as fit to fill the traditional roles of mother, wife, homemaker, nurturer or lover and economically productive roles are not seen as appropriate for them either (Traustadottir, 2004:2).

Although there are few statistics identifying problems and needs, women with disabilities confront a double discrimination, since they are women and disabled. It is widely documented that women with disabilities are typically seen as asexual. This is a general sentiment of the society as well as of most professionals with whom women with disabilities come into contact (Bukuzi, 2000:15). However, it seems ironic that women with disabilities are not seen as sexual beings and at the same time they are at a much greater risk of being sexually abused (Ziesler, 2004:1).

These violations of rights of women with disabilities have led to mobilisation of their cause. The United Nations Report (1995:3) states that for the first time, hundreds of disabled women joined non-disabled women in Beijing, China for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and specifically addressed issues of particular concern to women with disabilities. Two hundred women with disabilities and their allies from all over the world met at the First International Symposium on Issues of Women with Disabilities outside of Beijing. This meeting marked the largest international gathering of women with disabilities anywhere, ever. Strategies aimed at the ideals of inclusion, freedom and independence for disabled women were discussed. Article 46 of the Beijing Platform of Action recognises that women "face barriers to full equality and advancement because of factors such as their (...) disability" (UN report, 1995:5).

In South Africa, through the founding of the Disabled Women's Development Programme, women with disabilities were mobilised and their issues accommodated into the political agenda, with the establishment of the Gender Commission. One of the other challenges people with disabilities encounter is the issue of HIV/AIDS. For the first time there is now a disability sector representative in the South African AIDS Council (Bagopane, (2004) in Rowland, (2004:86).

People with disabilities, women and men, are most vulnerable because of their disability. They are likely not to get information and are likely not to access the workshops. Bagopane (2004) in Rowland, (2004:87) asserts that part of the reason is that people with disabilities sometimes regard the HIV/AIDS message as being irrelevant to them. Also in terms of being a woman in the African culture, she points out that women have no say in relation to sex and sexuality. This is even more marked with women with disabilities as firstly they do not have power and secondly they are disabled. In addition she draws attention to the current belief having sex with a virgin cures HIV/AIDS. Because women with disabilities are regarded as asexual, they are automatically assumed to be virgins -because nobody is expected to have sex with them. Women with disabilities are therefore at a higher risk.

Women with disabilities thus carry a double burden, being a woman and at the same time being disabled. Attitudes are certainly beginning to change albeit at a very slow rate. For the first time this year women with disabilities were recognised on National Women's Day in the Eastern Cape (Office on the Status of Disabled, 2004:2). This action is an indication that these disabled women were viewed as women first and disabled last.

2.9 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

2.9.1. Cognitive development

According to Wilson, (2003:114), children who have visual impairment often experience delays in other areas of development as well, the most common being the cognitive development. Wilson (2003:114) claims that the delays are partly because children with visual impairments cannot rely on their sense of sight to give reliable information about the world around them and without such information, it is difficult for children to construct knowledge about the world in which they live. Their cognitive development is also affected by the fact that by not seeing what is available for exploration and manipulation, they are not adequately motivated to become engaged with the world outside themselves. As a result of such limitations they miss out on not only information available through the medium of vision, but information from other channels of learning as well (Wilson, 2003:114).

Howard, Williams, Port and Lepper (1997) claim that seeing the world around them stimulates the development of visual memory in young children and makes them feel safe in exploring the world around them. Lack of such opportunities therefore might result in feelings of insecurity in relating to new experiences.

2.9.2 Social development and language

In addition to the negative impact on cognitive development, visual impairments tend to compromise other areas of development especially language and social development. Eye contact and the ability to see mouth movements and body language is compromised in children with visual impairment. This results in slow development of language and social interactions and speech delays or disorders (Wilson, (2003:114) and Poon-McBrayer & Lian, 2002: 180).

Wilson, (2003:115) asserts that these speech, language and social interaction difficulties can lead to self-orientation and or social isolation, which are typical characteristics of children with visual impairment. Wilson, (2003:115)) points out that it is of importance to heed the fact that sometimes social isolation is not necessarily as a result of the child's lack of social adjustment skills but due to the attitudes of people resulting in exclusion.

Veiga (2003:6)has indicated the existence of a certain degree of isolation of visually impaired pupils. They had a tendency to establish irregular relationships and assume an inferior status among their sighted companions. Konarska (2003:52) also adds that a study conducted with teenagers with visual disability showed timidity in social contacts as well as defensive attitudes. Bishop (2004:6) suggests that social skills be taught as an instructional area as shown in two separate studies. She adds that in both studies an indirect, cooperative approach to learning social skills was suggested.

The cooperative learning experience can pair a visually impaired learner with a sighted learner, or make the visually impaired learner a member of a learning team, creative materials are provided so that dialogue and social interaction must be used to complete an assignment. If particular attention is not given to social skills of the visually impaired, it would mean that they are just being prepared for graduation and not for life. The better the visually impaired learners are prepared to be competent, capable, confident, independent and employable, the more acceptance visual impairment will become as a trait instead of a disability, and the more inclusion will work. (Bishop, 2004:7).

Stainback & Stainback (1990:54) argue that research has indicated that if a student without friends is to gain the support and friendship of other students, he or she must, at the very least, have the opportunity to be with other students. The authors identify a number of activities that can provide opportunities for a student lacking friends, one of them being to encourage one to become involved in extracurricular activities of his or her choice in which the class members participate. They suggest that arranging peer tutoring, buddy systems could also be useful in providing opportunities for an isolated student to get to know classmates.

Some educators have been successful in pairing the student without friends with a popular student who others tend to gravitate towards. In this way the isolated student becomes associated with the popular student because of proximity to a sensitive, outgoing and accepting student who might be helpful in some instances. School personnel could also communicate with and encourage parents to provide opportunities in the community for their child to be around and interact with other students in the class. The family can assist their child to actively participate in the community in both formal and informal gatherings (Stainback & Stainback, 1990:57). Katz and Mirenda, (2002:30) suggest that achieving a sense of belonging is fundamental to children's psychological well being.

Stainback & Stainback (1990: 60) believe that along with providing opportunities for peer support and friendship development, there are ways school personnel can encourage students to build peer relationships with one another. They suggest that one way is to involve students in thinking about supportive relationships and friendships as a part of the curriculum. The goal is to make students more aware of, sensitive to, and accepting of the needs of others. For instance, a topic might be included in a health education class that focuses on the importance of providing support to every person through classmates and friends (Stainback & Stainback, 1990:61).

Stocking et al (in Stainback and Stainback, 1990) highlight the importance of reinforcing students exhibiting positive friendship and supporting behaviours. The author advises that when students approach an isolated peer and engaged him or her in an assigned activity, the educator might say, "The class is doing a good job working together to complete assignments." By letting students know that when they include new or isolated peers in their group or activity good things will happen, the chances are that more students will do it more often (Stocking, in Stainback & Stainback, 1990:60).

There must be peer support groups with other visually impaired learners. It is becoming increasingly clear that totally separating a child with a disability from other similarly learners with disabilities can have serious negative effects. Inclusive settings often result in a learner with a disability child being the only one in the class who is impaired. Contact with similar impaired learners helps to alleviate the feeling of being different. Educators have found that summer camps, retreats, encounter groups or just putting the learner in touch by phone, letter with another similarly disabled child can ease the stigma of difference. Positive role models (competent or older visually impaired child or adult) can also fill the need for "someone like me" to talk to. Adolescents especially seem to need this special peer contact and every attempt should be made to provide it in some way (Bishop, 2004:8).

It should be noted that the above list is not exhaustive and there are definitely other means that the educator could use to facilitate the process. Duck 1983 in Wilson, (1990:61) cautions that the value of having peer support and friends should not be misinterpreted to imply that having lots of support and friends is always good and few is always bad.

For some students, one or a few quality friendships may be more satisfying than having a large number of friends. Furthermore, providing excessive support to some students can interfere with the developmental skills they need. No student must be forced or cajoled into supporting or making friends with any particular student or group of students - making friends should be an individual choice (Stainback & Stainback, 1990:72).

As outlined above there are numerous ways that could be exploited to facilitate peer support and friendships, but it is essential that there be commitment on the part of the educator to ensure that those processes take place. Therefore inclusion offers social benefits for non-disabled children as well. They may have opportunities to learn many new skills, values and attitudes related to human differences and similarities.

2.10 CLASSROOM OR SCHOOL ADAPTATIONS

The level of support for students with visual impairments varies. Adaptations in the classroom and other areas of the school will certainly have to be made for children with visual impairment to enable them to be active learners in a fully inclusive way. However, the adaptations should be discussed with the learner to check suitability and maximum comfort. Classroom educators will have to work closely with a qualified teacher of the visually impaired or a mobility officer qualified to work with visually impaired children.

Such specialists can be of considerable assistance and should become an integral part of the disciplinary team serving the child. Visual aids such as glasses, large print and machines that enlarge type can be helpful (Wilson, 2003:117).

The following are some of the adaptations that could be made to support a learner with visual impairment in a classroom as outlined in the REHAB, (2001:2-3).

2.10.1 Lighting

Good lighting- ideally this means provision of a good even light throughout the room, but where that is not possible it is important to place the visually impaired learner in a suitable position in the room. The learner should be allowed to define the amount of light that gives maximum visual comfort and function.

2.10.2 Reading

Reading material should be clearly printed, and enlarged. Low vision aids with which the learner has been provided should be used properly. Additional time should be allowed for reading as the learner often cannot easily scan the whole page and requires time to rest his or her eyes as a result of vision fatigue. Taped books could also be used in cases where available.

2.10.3 Writing

Learners are likely to have considerable difficulty in writing neatly and quickly. Use of black felt-tip pens or roller ball pens rather than ballpoint pens should be encouraged. The paper used should be clearly lined, non-reflective white or yellow.

Allow the learner to sit at the front of the class near the blackboard. He or she should be allowed to walk up to the blackboard to check information. It assists to read aloud what the educator is writing on the blackboard. Blackboards should be repainted regularly.

2.10.4 Seating

Some children may need to work very close to the page, and should be allowed to do so (it is not possible to damage sight in this way, nor is there any danger of 'overusing' residual vision). A sloping desktop or bookstand may be helpful. If a child has better sight on one side than the other, this should be taken into account when seating the child in the classroom, so that vision is maximised.

Feedback between the pupil and educators is essential. The learner needs to communicate to the educator any problems, just as the educator needs to point out any areas where improvement is needed. Honest discussion should be encouraged so that needs and emotional problems will be identified and rectified as soon as possible (REHAB ,2001:2-3).

2.10.5 Classroom environment

According to Poon-McBrayer & Lian (2002: 182-183), a sensitive educator who gives instruction in elaborated description can be instrumental in helping a student with visual impairment to succeed. Wilson (2003:115) notes that special instruction in orientation and mobility skills can also help children with visual impairment to make use of their residual vision and increase their ability to explore and move about independently. According to Wilson (2003), orientation involves an awareness of space and the environment, especially in terms of one's own body position in space.

Through orientation training, he argues, "children are taught to take advantage of their other senses (i.e. touch, hearing, and smell) to replace sight in learning about their environment and their body's position in that environment" (Wilson, 2003:115).

Howard et al 2000 in Wilson.(2003:16) suggest that one of the ways adults can help children to use their residual vision is to limit the amount of assistance they provide. Howard et al advise that generally assistance should be provided only in situations where safety and/or success call for intervention. Besides they caution consideration should be taken before offering assistance in each situation. If the child is able to figure out things on his or her own, a form of "learned helplessness" may hinder the child from exploring his or her environment.

A Paper by the American Foundation for the Blind, on Educating students with visual impairments for inclusion in society, (2004:7) identifies competencies for educators of learners who are visually impaired as including the following:

- Understanding of development patterns in learners with visual impairment
- Ability to design and modify core and specialised curricular for the student with visual impairment
- Knowledge of specialised technology
- Specialised books, materials and equipment used by the student with visual impairment
- Knowledge of specific policies and specialised resources
- Understanding vision loss and other related impairments
- Collaboration with families and other professionals.

2.11 SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The (UNESCO, 2003:23) identifies an effective support system in schools as being essential in ensuring that every learner is given an opportunity to become a successful student. It views support as including everything that enables learners to learn and outlines the most important forms of support as being available to every school: children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents becoming partners in the education of their children and communities supporting their local school.

There are other formal types of support, for example, from teachers with specialist knowledge, resource centres and professionals from other sectors international organisations, and non-governmental organisations. A co-ordinated approach to the provision of formal support is critical with services and agencies working together (UNESCO, 2003:24).

Funding provision for learners who experience difficulties is always problematic. UNESCO (2003:13) identifies the shortage of resources as the major constraint in effecting inclusive education in the countries of the South. Lack of schools, or inadequate facilities, lack of teachers or qualified staff, lack of learning materials and absence of support could compromise the quality of education. Although many countries have made commendable progress towards achieving the goal of education for all, this has become through sacrificing quality (UNESCO, 2003:14).

Lewis, (2000:202) addresses the issue of quality in inclusive education. He suggests that the focus on inclusion may overlook the need for quality and poses a question: How far is it tenable to assume that the education system as presently constituted provides a healthy environment for all, let alone the most vulnerable? He thus emphasises the 'education' in inclusive education. Wilson (2003:32), however, proclaims it "is obvious that the challenges are evident but they should not discourage us from serving disabled children in inclusive schools."

UNESCO, (2003:14) also cautions, that the cost of education of currently marginalised and excluded children should not be an issue. The eventual social and economical costs of exclusion if these children are not educated should be added in the total cost estimates. Few education systems can provide all the resources they would wish for from state funds alone.

It is thus essential for national governments and local governments to establish partnerships with potential funding partners. International donors and NGOs are obvious sources of additional resourcing but so are the business and industry sectors, which have a vested interest in establishing and helping to produce a well-educated workforce. (UNESCO, 2003:15).

2.11.1 Financial support

In terms of the WP6 (2001:43-44), for the short to medium term, that is the first eight years, a three-pronged approach to funding is proposed with new conditional grants from the government, funding from the line budgets of provincial governments and donor funds constituting the chief sources of funding. In order to develop a feasible implementation plan for the envisaged 20-year-period, a number of research tasks will need to be undertaken. Such research will inform the development of the implementation plan, particularly in respect of the financial, human resource and institutional constraints (WP6, 2001:44).

2.11.2 Strengthening education support services

The WP6 (2001:28-29) believes the key to reducing barriers to learning and within education and training, lies in a strengthened education support service. This will have at its centre, new district based support teams that will comprise staff from provincial district, regional and head offices and from special schools. Special Schools will have more of an outreach role to assist and support and thus will not be closed down. The WP6, (2001:28-29) states that the primary function of these district support teams will be to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications.

Through supporting teaching, learning and management, they will build the capacity of schools, early childhood and adult basic education and training centres, colleges and higher education institutions to recognise and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs. District Support Teams will firstly, be established in the 30 districts that form part of the District Development Programme and on the basis of lessons learnt, expanding these to the remaining schools districts may be considered (WP6, 2001:29).

At institutional level, in general, further and higher education, support teams will be required. The primary function of these teams will be to put in place properly co-ordinated learner and educator support services. These services will support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs. Where appropriate, these teams should be strengthened by expertise from the local community, district support teams and higher education institutions. District support teams will provide a full range of education support services, such as professional development in curriculum and assessment, to these institutional-level support teams (WP6, 2001: 30).

An analysis of relevant policy and other documents in South Africa regarding support services reveals that there is currently a conspicuous absence of specific support strategies that will address the needs of educators in order to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education. The demands that educators face in the performance of their professional roles and responsibilities and the variables that the educators report as stressful in inclusive education are not addressed (Ellof , Engelbrecht and Swart , 2000: 3).

An investigation of factors that contribute to educators' ability to meet the educational needs of learners with disabilities in inclusive settings, the stress and coping skills in Gauteng and the Western Cape were examined. Overall, the most stressful issues for these educators during inclusion were limited contact with the parents together with the parents' perceived lack of understanding of the learners' capabilities. The in-service training was inadequate to prepare them for inclusive education. Their reduced ability to teach other learners as effectively as they would like when including a learner with a disability was also stressful (Ellof, et al, 2000:4). A similar study was carried out in Spain, particularly with inclusion of learners with visual impairment. The study reveals that educators view the incorporation of such pupils as a difficult situation, which implies greater dedication in terms of time. Secondly, an update in training is needed if they are to maximise the personal and social independence of the visually impaired learner (Veiga, 2003:4).

Having full responsibility for the learner's welfare, adapting the curriculum to meet the learner's needs and obtaining funding to support the learner were experienced as stressful (Ellof et al, 2000: 3). Educators' perceived perceptions of their own skills and responsibilities and level of support provided for them, are likely to affect their willingness to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Eloff et al (2000:4) therefore argue that access to an effective support system that focuses on helpful ways to increase educators' sense of efficacy, can have a positive effect on innovative practices in inclusive classrooms. Without the necessary support the quality of inclusive education will be compromised.

2.12. CURRICULUM

There is a growing body of research on inclusive education that derives from the work carried out in a number of schools and other learning centres around the world. It suggests some key elements for curricula that aim at developing more inclusive education:

- Broad common goals defined for all, including the knowledge, skills and values to be acquired
- A flexible structure to facilitate responding to the diversity and providing diverse opportunities for practice and performance in terms of content, methods and level of participation
- Assessment based on individual progress
- Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of learners acknowledged and
- Content, knowledge and skills relevant to learners' context (UNESCO, 2003:16).

The curriculum can facilitate the development of more inclusive settings when it leaves room for the centre of learning or individual educator to make adaptations so that it makes better sense in the local context and for the individual learner. In Uganda, a culturally sensitive, flexible curriculum has been designed to reach out to semi-nomadic cattle keepers living in a fragile ecological environment. The revised, adapted curriculum has been designed to suit the learning and skills requirements of these children with in-built provision for indigenous knowledge and skills, basic life skills relevant to pastoral life such as animal husbandry, water and rangeland management, environmental protection, early warning systems and positive cultural practices. The design and development of specific learning and teaching materials as well as teaching arrangements take into account the needs, interest, aspirations and uniqueness of pastoral learners (UNESCO, 2003:17).

2.13 COLLABORATION IN INCLUSION OF LEARNERS

A Paper by the American Foundation for the Blind on Educating students with visual impairments for inclusion in society, (2003:4) states that education of children with visual impairment involves significant intervention co-ordinated by an educational team to ensure that appropriate development occurs. This therefore means that there should be collaboration between the stakeholders if the process of inclusion is to be effective and efficient. Engelbrecht, (2004) in Eloff and Ebersohn (2004:1) states that effective collaboration in a group context has the potential to create high quality outcomes. She asserts that collaboration means working jointly especially in an intellectual endeavour, assisting, interacting or associating. Furthermore, she points out that participating in groups does not necessarily imply that participants collaborate; collaboration is something people come to accept, it cannot be imposed. Engelbrecht (2004) quotes qualities by Pugach and Johnson for effective collaboration:

- People who are effective at collaboration recognise that the goal is complex and requires more than a combination of individual efforts and they honour the creativity generated with others.
- People who are effective at collaboration value the establishment of trust and the intellectual challenge of working together
- People who are effective at collaboration value personal growth as a result of participating in the collaboration (Pugach and Johnson, (2002) in Eloff and Ebersohn, 2004:16-18).

In a collaborative approach, mainstream educators need to be recognised as full partners with professionals, parents and others, and will consequently have increased responsibility for co-ordinating activities for learners with disabilities Eloff and Ebersohn, (2004:5).

Educators therefore have to wear a number of hats to be successful in helping all learners gain the skills necessary for becoming independent and productive members of society. Professional support providers, such as educational psychologists also have to move out of their traditional role as independent experts who focus on the individual needs of learners. Professionals such as educational psychologists knowledgeable in the facilitation of supportive relationships and who can coordinate inclusion programmes, communicate with other professionals, educators, parents and learners through informal and formal consultation and collaboration (Stainback and Stainback, 1990).

Collaboration is part of the working world of professionals today. Professionals historically have worked in a highly isolated, rather than a collaborative way. Collaborating on various levels with colleagues from different disciplines, who approach problems from different perspectives related to their educational or disciplinary backgrounds, has proved to be successful. There are three collaboration models, namely multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary. Engelbrecht (2004) in Eloff and Eberson, (2004:4) claims that these models occur along a continuum from little to great collaboration.

In addition, Engelbrecht (2004) in Eloff and Eberson, (2004:9) feels strongly that the trans-disciplinary approach is the most collaborative of the three disciplinary group approaches. In trans-disciplinary approach, groups of professionals perform their related tasks interactively and individual group members bring their different expertise to the group, share their expertise and ideas and support one another. She adds that where necessary, an expert model of consultation is used characterised by one way channel of communication in which the consultant as expert gives prescriptions to teachers regarding the learning support strategies they need to implement.

Engelbrecht (2004) in Eloff and Ebersson, (2004:9) advises that for a trans-disciplinary group to collaborate effectively, all group members must share a commitment to this approach. Group members must be willing to expand their "traditional" professional roles to include knowledge about responsibilities for components of other disciplines and to release knowledge about some responsibilities for components of their own discipline to other group members.

In Spain, establishment of Support Teams has been fostered. Teams include visiting support educators, social workers, psychologists, and ophthalmologists. The primary aim of these Teams is to attend to the support required for learners with visual impairment. They do this through assessment of the different community agents involved in the educational process and provision of specific aids which visual impairment entails (Veiga, 2003:4).

2.14 CONSIDERING CHILDREN'S VIEWS

Wolfendale (2000:8) strongly believes that children are important 'stakeholders' in their own learning and education. She adds that the tendency is to misjudge the children's capabilities and insights into what are of benefit to their own learning and development.

Wolfendale (2000) outlines the reasoning and justification for considering children's views and consulting them regarding their own learning and education. For her, the reasons are threefold: on equal opportunities grounds, on educational grounds and on psychological grounds. Regarding equal opportunities, Wolfendale (2000:8) alludes to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12, addressing free expression of opinion, maintains that children have a right to express an opinion in matters affecting them and that their opinions should be heard and given due weight.

With regard to educational grounds, Wolfendale (2000:8) argues that children become more involved and engaged in activities, which match how they think and what they value. Furthermore she asserts that considering children's views is an important part of matching learning tasks to the learner. Regarding psychological grounds, Wolfendale, (2000:8) notes how "direct active involvement learning increases learning rate and output". She also notes how cognitive development and social engagement with adults contributes to effective learning. Such involvement and engagement can be enhanced, she says through dialogue based on children's views.

Wilson (2003:38) adds that The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice also specifies that "the views of the child should be sought and taken into account. Some people have been sceptical about the involvement of children and expression of their views. However, Wilson (2003:38) points out that several recent studies suggest that they can. She asserts that Wolfendale (1998) found that the parent and the child working together could complete successfully a developmental profile yielding valuable information about the young children's feelings and self-perceptions.

2.15 DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Changing the way people regard disability from purely a health and welfare issue to primarily a human rights and development issue has significant implications for service delivery. It means that disability has to be integrated into all poverty alleviation programmes taking place within the broader community. The INDS (1997:49) views community development as a tool to alleviate poverty. It strongly advocates increasing the capacity of people with disabilities to influence their future and professes that community development initiatives should foster human solidarity, social equity, self-respect, respect for diversity and continuing activism. It further states that community development initiatives should be based on the following cornerstones:

- The support for and strengthening of disabled organisations
- The participation of all sectors of society in all community development initiatives, that is, integrated community development.

The researcher will thus attempt to illustrate how some of the barriers identified earlier have been addressed through community development, particularly in the Eastern Cape. First of all an attempt will be made to clarify the following concepts: Community, community development and participation.

De Beer and Swanepoel, (1998:17) state that community is usually defined in terms of geographic locality of shared interests and needs or in terms of deprivation and disadvantage. Schurink, (1996:407) claims that "the ideal community is that group of people who share physical and social space, making them aware of individual, family and community strengths and needs, and helping them to create informal support networks in co-operation with professional helpers, so as to manage resources in such a manner that social problems are prevented on a primary, secondary and tertiary level."

The definition by Schurink pays particular attention to the involvement of a professional person as the person to facilitate community development. De Beer and Swanepoel, (1998:18), however, proclaim that communities do not wait for and often do not need, an outsider (e.g. government or non-governmental organisation official) to redeem them. Roberts in De Beer and Swanepoel, (1998:18) states, "a community exists when a group of people perceives common needs and problems, acquire a sense of identity and a common set of objectives."

There are numerous definitions of community. In this study a community will be considered as a group of people who have a common need and most often reside in the same geographic area.

2.15.1 Community development

The United Nations in Ncapai, (2002:24) defines community development as "the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. This complex process is then made up of two essential elements: the participation of the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living with as much as possible on their own initiative, and the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help and make these more effective. It is expressed in programmes designed to achieve a wide variety of specific improvements.

The definition puts emphasis on the fact that it is the efforts of people themselves that are key in conjunction with the government and not the government taking a leading role and the people at the end. The definition further recognises the fact that for the people to become part and parcel of the nation, their economic, social and cultural conditions need to be improved.

This definition by the United Nations ties in well with the RDP/ WP1994, INDS, 1997, and the WP6, 2001, all being some of the legislation that address the inclusion of people into the mainstream of society. Community development in this context would be particularly looking at how people with disabilities and their families could participate meaningfully in order to change their lives. The barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating in the mainstream societies have been examined earlier. The researcher therefore will now attempt to see how people with disabilities themselves and their families could take advantage of the legislation in place and become part of the development activities taking place in their various communities.

2.15.2 Participation and empowerment

Cernea (1999) in Lundy, (1999:34) asserts that participation is about empowering people to mobilise their own capabilities, be social actors rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions and control the activities that affect their lives. In Cernea's definition the key word is "empowering" which appears to be a by-product of participation.

Empowerment enables people to make decisions and have power to take charge of the activities affecting their situation. The definition seems especially appropriate for people with disabilities who have for so long been denied self-advocacy and self-representation in issues that affect their own lives. The rights of people with disabilities are best promoted by people with disabilities themselves.

Burkey (1998:56) sees participation as leading to development of self-confidence, pride, initiative, creativity, responsibility and co-operation. He goes on to say that without development within people themselves, all efforts to alleviate poverty will be immensely more difficult, if not impossible. In a sense participation results in human growth and cannot be thought of as just involvement of people in predetermined plans. People with disabilities therefore need to become active participants.

The above-mentioned definitions tie in well with the assertion of the RDP/WP (1994:8). It states that development is not about "the delivery of goods to passive citizenry but is about involvement and growing empowerment."

2.15.3 Community development activities

The INDS (1997:49) states that one of the challenges faced by service delivery is the uncoordinated way in which services are rendered which has affected the accessibility of services to people with disabilities. Offices on the Status of Disabled Persons have been established in the Presidency as well as in the Offices of the Provincial Premiers. These offices are responsible for working together with, and parallel to the various state bodies, departments and Disabled People Organisations (DPO's) and NGO's to ensure the promotion of disability issues and facilitate the mainstreaming of disability (INDS, 1997:49).

This means that there must be an integration of disability issues in all government development strategies, planning and programmes. To complement the process, there must be capacity building and wide public education in order to change society's attitude and stereotypes towards people with disabilities (INDS, 1997:49).

People with disabilities therefore had to be included in all poverty alleviation programmes. This has proven to be a step in the right direction, as now people with disabilities are not left behind in activities taking place within their various communities. An example is the infrastructure development programme, which aimed at improving the infrastructure of the rural schools. In the past three years the programme provided 28 000-job opportunities for men and women, and people with disabilities were amongst them (Department of Education, 2004:3).

Human resource development is one of the key elements that can be used to break the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) has an impact in the lives of many citizens by empowering communities with necessary skills to enable them to participate meaningfully in the mainstream of the economy. The programme is conducted with the help of four different SETAs including the Construction, Energy, Hospitality and Tourism and Primary Agriculture and Training Authority SETAs. The skills development programme is part of the department's plan to alleviate poverty, contribute to economic growth and sustainable development. The programme is targeting poor, unemployed, unskilled community members with more emphasis on women, people with disabilities and youth (Department of Education, 2004:3).

A major feature unique to Eastern Cape has been the establishment of District and Local Disability Structures. The establishment of these structures was facilitated by the OSDP (Eastern Cape), municipalities and people with disabilities themselves. They are elected by people with disabilities themselves and care is taken to ensure that there is not only representation of all disabilities in those structures but gender representation is ensured. Over and above people with disabilities, they would consist of government officials from various departments and councillors particularly those responsible for disability, youth and gender (OSDP, 2002/2003 Annual report).

The Disability Structures were established after Local Government committed themselves by signing the Integrated Provincial Disability Strategy (IPDS). The IPDS was formulated to give guidance to departments and local government so that they are able to implement the recommendations of the INDS. The IPDS was adopted in the Eastern Cape Legislature during the Disabled People's Parliament in November 2002 where a Disability Declaration was signed on behalf of the provincial legislature, provincial government, private sector, organised labour and local government. The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) committed local government to amongst other issues, to support, facilitate and fund local and district level organisational structures in order to promote effective co-ordination of disability programmes at this level (OSDP, 2002/2003).

Apart from the fact that Local and District Municipalities are compelled because of the declaration that was signed on their behalf by SALGA, to set up disability structures, there are also other reasons for their existence amongst them the following:

- (a) To advise the municipalities on the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities.
- (b) To ensure that disability is addressed in the development, empowerment and planning of the municipality(Integrated Development Plans)
- (c) To afford the municipality the opportunity to communicate with people with disabilities a more organised manner.
- (d) To monitor the process of service delivery especially as it relates to disability
- (e) To advise the municipality on any disability issues

Much has been achieved through the establishment of these structures particularly considering that they are fairly new. People with disabilities are able to benefit from the development programmes taking place within their communities and are able to articulate their concerns and issues themselves in various forums. The structures have been embraced by politicians (mayors and councillors) as well (OSDP, 2003/2004 Annual Report).

Despite of the achievements there are challenges that still need to be overcome. One of the challenges has been the fact that although District Disability Structures exist, some have not been functioning due to power struggles. Lack of capacity within people with disabilities is also another obstacle. The INDS (1997:49) identifies the lack of capacity as one of the key areas that need attention. A need for leadership training has been identified and also training in various legislation, which impacts on disability for example the WP6, 2001(OSDP, 2003:5).

The model of the Eastern Cape of Disability Structures has in many situations produced tangible results. It is the researcher's view that even with inclusive education it needs active participation of people with disabilities themselves to initiate the process of making communities aware of such legislation and not leave it to the Department of Education. Collaboration with the Department of

Education, Social Development, Department of Health, NGOs concerned with disability issues would be vital in the realisation of inclusion.

From the discussion and the views expressed above inclusion should be viewed as an all-embracing approach, which accommodates every one unconditionally. Burden (1992) in Goduka and Swadener, (1999: 145) sums it well when he asserts that inclusion will be an illusion for those that do not believe in the Xhosa proverb: "*Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*", meaning a person is a person through other persons, or a human being is a human being only in relation to other human beings. "I am because we are – we are because I am."

He goes on to say that "I am we" is different from the worldview embraced by the people of European descent, a pivotal axiom expressed through the white Eurocentric axiom "I think, therefore I am" which implies absolutism, a monolithic view, individualism and a one-dimensional process. Goduka & Swadener (1999:37) continue that communality, collectivity and human unity, pluralism and multi-dimensionality are implicit in the proverb. The proverb argues that the principle of *ubuntu* is critical in building a theoretical and philosophical foundation and solid scaffolding for an inclusive yet diverse education. Karangwa,(2003:4) affirms the latter statement by stating, "African people have a well entrenched and admirable culture of extensive and family bonds, community solidarity and spirit of mutual support- all of which should be exploited for the benefits of inclusion for people with disabilities." It is evident though from the discussion that achieving inclusive education is a going to be an immense challenge.

2.16 SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the exclusion and inclusion of people with disabilities. This chapter also gave definitions of concepts and terms and the scenario with regard to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the post apartheid era.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1.INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the methods and techniques used in the study of the inclusion of learners with visual impairment into mainstream schools. Furthermore, it presents the strategies, which were employed in obtaining data, the research method and process, techniques, ethics and limitations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research study was based on qualitative data and was exploratory because the researcher was investigating experiences and feelings of learners, educators and parents on inclusion of learners with visual impairment into mainstream schools. According to Babbie (1998:90), a qualitative exploratory study researches the subjective dimension of human experience. Th author adds that it involves the exploration of subjective meaning of events to the individuals.

Babbie (1998:90) asserts that exploratory studies are most typically done for three purposes:

- (1) To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding,
- (2) To test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study, and
- (3) To develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

Babbie (1998:90) adds that exploratory studies are also appropriate for more persistent phenomena and can be pursued through the use of focus groups, or guided small group discussions.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 Sampling

Strydom and Venter in De Vos, (2002:197) argue that, as a concept, sampling is one of the most important in the total research endeavour and thus it is imperative that it is understood before selecting a sampling plan. They identify two methods of sampling namely probability and non-probability methods. With non-probability sampling, the probability of selection cannot be estimated, so there is little or no support for the claim that the sample is representative of the population from which it was drawn.

The researcher employed snowball sampling, which is one of the types of non-probability sampling. Bailey, (1987:95) explains that snowball sampling is a method for identifying or sampling in a network. He adds that it is based on the analogy of a snowball, which begins small but becomes larger as it is rolled on wet snow and picks up additional snow. Furthermore he points out that snowball sampling is a multi-stage technique. It begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases.

The researcher knew one parent who used to have children at Khanyisa Special School who in turn introduced her to other relevant parents. Through the interaction with the parents the researcher came to know the children and later, the schools they were attending. Three schools were involved in the study. They are in townships outside East London, one being a primary school and the other two high schools. All the respondents are black and Xhosa speaking.

The researcher performed six individual interviews with parents and six children, (four with albinism, three girls and three boys), eight individual interviews and one focus group consisting of eight members with educators from Masakhe School.

A further two focus groups were run - at Kusile Comprehensive School consisting of seven educators, and at Mizamo High School, it consisted of five educators. Unfortunately due to pressure of work on the part of the educators in the latter schools, they were not available for individual interviews hence the researcher did only focus groups with them.

Below the researcher gives a brief overview of the schools.

Masakhe Primary School

Masakhe Primary School is located about six kilometres from central East London in a township called Duncan Village. It includes Grade 1 to Grade Seven. The school is situated in a poverty-stricken area characterised by unemployment and poor socio-economic conditions. Most dwellings are shacks. The high educator-pupil ratio is one of the challenges facing the school (Educator learner ratio is on average 1: 50).

Kusile Comprehensive School

Kusile Comprehensive School is situated in Duncan Village. It offers both academic and technical subjects. The school ranges from Grade 8 to Grade 12 and learners are mainly from Duncan Village with very few from outside the township. The area is characterised by extremely poor socio-economic conditions (poor housing, poor toilet facilities and very high unemployment rate). The building structure of the school is a fairly new and quite big. Resources for the technical subjects are catered for but the biggest challenge is in terms of human resources. Educator pupil ratio is on average 1:60.

Mizamo High School

Mizamo High School in Mdantsane Township is about 30 kilometres from East London. The school caters for Grade 8 to Grade 12 and learners are mainly from Mdantsane. One of the biggest challenges faced by the school is lack of security, which results in vandalising of school property and break-ins, which are real drawbacks. Most learners are from poor families.

3.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.4.1 Data gathering techniques

Grinnell (1998:260) cautions that "well before the final decision is made about choosing a particular data collection method, the researcher must attempt to recognise and deal with any potential problems in implementation." He adds that the researcher should be fully aware of the strengths and limitations of the method chosen in producing valid and reliable data and how it will affect the study and the generalisation thereof. He states that there are no perfect data collection methods; each has its limitations.

The method of data collection used for this research undertaking was that of semi-structures interviews and focus groups. Marlow (1998:160) states "in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has more freedom to pursue hunches and can improvise with the questions." Marlow adds that sometimes semi-structured interviews are called open-ended interviews.

Grinnell (1998:266) outlines the advantages of interviews by explaining that,

- Interviews have the highest response rates
- Respondents tend to provide more thoughtful answers
- They allow for longer, more open-ended responses

- They allow recording of non-verbal information
- They can reach disabled and illiterate respondents
- The interviewer can clarify questions for respondents
- Respondents may be more willing to answer sensitive questions

In spite of the above advantages, interviews also have limitations, which Grinnell (1998) has summarised as follows:

- They are expensive
- They have the highest opportunity for the introduction of experimenter bias
- Respondent may react to personality of interviewer rather than content of the interview
- Interviewer may mis-record response.

The interviews with the parents and learners were conducted at their particular homes. Sometimes getting hold of the parents was a problem as an appointment would be arranged, but when the researcher arrived the parents would not be ready to accommodate the researcher, so another appointment would have to be arranged. This resulted in a great deal of time being wasted but the researcher had to be patient. The educators were seen at school at a time that was suitable for them and the researcher had to arrange her time around their availability. The educators were sceptical when they were first introduced to the researcher as they thought that she had been sent by the Department of Education. After she explained exactly what the research was about, they relaxed.

Through interviews the researcher was able to explain and make clarifications where necessary, and probe for more information. The respondents were also able to clarify some of the responses that were not clear to the researcher.

3.4.2 Focus groups

The researcher conducted focus groups for parents, learners and educators at Masakhe, and for educators only at Kusile and Mizamo Schools. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999:4) define a focus group as "group discussions exploring a specific set of issues." They add, "Focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by explicit use of group interaction to generate data." Kitzinger and Barbour (1999:5) point out that focus groups are ideal for exploring people's experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns. The researcher found the focus groups useful, as she was looking at the learners', educators' and parents' experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns on the inclusion of a learner with visual impairment into mainstream schools. The biggest challenge was to get parents and learners to one place. A lot of time was wasted waiting for people who did not arrive on time. The group sessions took 30 to 45 minutes and with each group the researcher met them twice.

The questions focused on the following:

- Understanding of inclusive education
- Reasons for inclusive education
- Feelings about inclusive education
- Barriers/challenges to inclusion of a learner with visual impairment
- Kinds of support required to make inclusive education a reality
- The challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education.

3.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis according to De Vos (2002:339) is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative and fascinating process. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data.

By condensing the bulk of the data into analysable units, one creates categories with and from the data. This process is referred to as coding. Coding can also be thought of in terms of data simplification or reduction. According to Seidel and Kelle in Coffey and Atkinson (1996:26-29) the role of coding is (a) noticing relevant phenomena,(2) collecting examples of those phenomena, (3) analysing those phenomena in order to find commonalties, patterns, differences. Coding can be used to expand, transform and reconceptualise data and opens up more diverse analytical possibilities (Seidel and Kelle in Coffey and Atkinson, (1996:26-29).

The information received from the respondents was divided into categories, similarities and dissimilarities and common themes. Data presentation also included selected quotations of responses of respondents and discussions thereof.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Williams et al (in De Vos, 2002:62) state that the fact that human beings are the objects of study in the social sciences brings unique ethical problems to the fore. They add that for researchers in the social sciences, the ethical issues are pervasive and complex, since data should never be obtained at the expense of human beings. During the study the researcher had to be aware of ethical issues during the interaction with the participants.

3.6.1 Informed consent

Williams et al in De Vos, (2002:65) suggest that informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures that will be followed during investigation, advantages and disadvantages, be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives.

Bailey (1997:409) maintains that participants should be legally and psychologically competent to give consent and be aware that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

The researcher explained fully the aims and objectives of the research to the participants. She received consent from the parents as all the learners were under the age of 21. Although the researcher obtained consent from the Department of Education, further voluntary participation was sought from the educators.

3.6.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Grinnell (1998:74) strongly believes that protection of participants' privacy is a right, not a privilege. Marlow (1998: 190) states that both anonymity and confidentiality help participants avoid harm and he makes a distinction between these two concepts. According to Marlow (1998), anonymity means that the researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. Confidentiality means that the researcher knows the identity of the respondents and their associated responses, but ensures not to disclose this information.

The researcher assured the participants that their responses and identity would remain anonymous. This indication made the respondents feel comfortable. They felt free to speak their minds. The participants were assured that their identity would be protected. The researcher did not influence the participants to respond in any particular way.

3.6.3 Limitations of the study

The researcher cannot argue that the study could be generalised. As stated before, this study only focused on the learners who originally attended Khanyisa Special School.

The fact that the research was conducted in the township schools, which are predominantly black, implies that the study is limited to only one racial group. The fact that the researcher had to translate words like "inclusive education" may, in some instances, have changed the real meaning of the term. The majority of learners were learners with albinism and therefore were not representative of a cross section of visual impairment.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION OF
FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at discussing and analysing the research findings obtained from educators, learners and parents. It also aims to reach conclusions about the findings themselves and their relation to the goals and objectives of the study. As the researcher has already stated, the data, which was collected from the respondents on each of the questions discussed in the interview and focus groups, was mainly qualitative.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

4.2.1 Understanding Inclusive Education

4.2.1.1 Masakhe Primary School

At Masakhe the researcher interviewed eight educators. Teachers were later placed in a focus group. In discussion with other educators they reported their understanding that inclusion is about the admission of learners with disabilities into ordinary schools. Only two educators indicated that inclusion is about the admission of all learners and ensuring that those learners benefit from the education taking place. They said that they happened to know this as they were currently studying a module on inclusive education through Fort Hare University in East London.

4.2.1.3 Kusile Comprehensive School

At Kusile the researcher held a focus group with seven educators. The educators admitted that they did not know what inclusive education was, but seemed to think inclusive education as being the admission of learners with disabilities to ordinary schools.

4.2.1.4 Mizamo High School

The researcher held a focus group consisting of five educators at Mizamo. The educators indicated their perception that inclusive education is about the admission of learners with albinism into mainstream schools.

4.2.1.5 Learners

All the six learners interviewed did not report knowing anything about inclusive education.

4.2.1.6 Parents

Four parents said they had never heard of inclusive education. Two reported that they heard about it recently over the radio and from a social worker from a non-governmental organisation, called the Association for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (REHAB). They stated that inclusive education is about the admission of learners with disabilities into schools nearby their homes.

4.2.1.7 Findings

Educators, learners and parents did not know about inclusive education. Only two educators had an idea of what inclusive education is. They seemed to think that inclusive education is about the admission of learners with disabilities to mainstream schools. The WP6 states, "inclusive education is about recognising and respecting the differences among learners and building on similarities. It is about supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met."

Furthermore, inclusion is about supporting learners, educators and the system as a whole so that diverse learning needs are met paying particular attention in the removal of barriers in the system (WP6, 2001:17, Goduka and Swadener, 1999:156 and Engelbrecht et al, 1999:19).

4.2.2. The reasons for the introduction of inclusive education

4.2.2.1 Masakhe Primary School

The educators reported that inclusion was introduced in order to accommodate learners with disabilities in attending mainstream schools, as the special schools were to close down. They also felt that the government realises that people with disabilities have a right to be taught amongst other learners.

4.2.2.2 Kusile Comprehensive School

The educators felt that it was introduced so that learners with disabilities could attend school nearby their homes. Furthermore, they argued that the government wants to acknowledge that learners with disabilities are just like other learners. Inclusive education is, they felt, one of the changes that are brought about by the government.

4.2.2.3 Mizamo High School

Educators indicated that they did not know, but thought it could be part of the transformation processes brought about by the government.

4.2.2.4 Learners

The learners said they did not know but assumed that it was a means to ensure that they could attend schools close to their homes.

4.2.2.5 Parents

The parents thought the government wanted to do away with boarding schools as the learners sometimes cause trouble in such settings. They also thought that the government is beginning to realise that their children are children too, and do not have to be isolated from other children whom they stay with in the township.

4.2.2.6 Findings

Educators, learners and parents did not know why inclusive education was introduced. WP6 (2001) states that "it is the government's obligation to provide basic education to all learners and its commitment to the central principles of the Constitution are also guided by the recognition that a new unified education and training system must be based on equity, redressing the past imbalances and on a progressive raising of the quality education and training". Furthermore, the INDS (1997) condemns the segregation of persons with disabilities from the mainstream of society. It professes the inclusion of people with disabilities in all spheres of society and suggests that the establishment of an inclusive education and training system as a cornerstone of an integrated and caring society. The WP6, (2001:21) adds that special schools will not be closed down, but will be strengthened to provide expertise and support, especially professional support in the curriculum, assessment and instruction as part of the district support team to neighbouring schools.

4.2.3. Feelings towards inclusion of learners with visual impairment

4.2.3.1 Masakhe Primary School

All the educators at Masakhe said they did not have any qualms about inclusion of learners who have visual impairment but indicated that they would not be able to handle learners who had severe visual problems.

In fact they realised that some learners with disabilities should be attending mainstream schools, as their impairments were not very serious. This, they felt, was illustrated in the two learners that they have at school. They said they believed that learners with disabilities learners should be receiving education with other learners who need to get used to them and hopefully teasing will be minimised. The process of inclusion, however, is going to be challenging on their part.

4.2.3.2 Kusile Comprehensive School

The educators indicated that they did not have a problem, but felt the needs of the particular learner at their school would be better served in a special school than at their school. They outlined that through their ignorance of albinism, they had not even realised that the particular learner had an eyesight problem and had never given attention to her needs. They also pointed out that due to the large classes, they sometimes could not pick up individual needs as had happened with this particular child. They felt very bad as they had struggled to read her handwriting but never really paid much attention to it. They felt that a great deal needs to be done in terms of education around dealing with teasing of learners who are different.

They reported having problems in dealing with teasing which is reported to them now and again, particularly the learner who is teased about being "inkawu", a monkey due to the fact that she is a learner with albinism. They feel that although they do their bit regarding awareness for the rest of the learners, if someone who is more knowledgeable could come and educate the learners, things would be much better. They feel that many learners would drop out if the problem of teasing was not dealt with. In spite of all their reservations, they felt inclusive education was a good move as learners with disabilities are children too and it was high time they be treated as such.

One of them said " these children are belong to our brothers and sisters and who knows maybe one of us could become disabled one day." These learners therefore should be treated like humans - they said, "we should have *ubuntu* towards them."

4.2.3.3 Mizamo High School

Educators stated that it was difficult to say how they felt but indicated that it depended on that particular learner. Some, they felt, were "better" than others, citing that one of their children was easy to deal with and was progressing well in his schoolwork. But the other was struggling, not only because of his bad eyesight. He seemed to be experiencing social problems as he was unable even to update his spectacles due to financial constraints. One of the educators was very negative about the whole issue of inclusive education. She felt strongly that it was not going to work. She indicated, however, that despite having completed a section on inclusive education in her senior degree and having even watched a cassette on inclusion, she saw no room for it.

4.2.3.4 Learners

The learners felt that inclusive education was a good thing, as they were now able to stay with their parents and siblings. In spite of the happiness of staying with family and peers, 2 learners, one from Kusile Comprehensive School and the other from Mizamo High School, would like to go back to special school. The one at Kusile felt that she benefited and managed well at the special school. She also indicated that whilst she was doing her primary education at Masakhe, she also performed well. She felt at Masakhe School there was individual attention and some of the things done to make her maximise her performance included the following: she was moved to the front so that she could see on the board, the boards were painted black, there was teasing in the beginning, but at least it stopped eventually, and the educators were supportive.

She said things at Kusile School were very different. Classes were large, resulting in no individual attention, there was no painting of black boards or being moved to the front. She continues to be teased although educators have dealt harshly with the pupils who have done it before. (One student told her that when she dies she would be taken to the forest and not buried amongst everybody else). She added that one of the things that was nice about at the special school was that they were all the same and nobody laughed at anyone.

The learner from Mizamo stated that his parents could not afford the schooling and attempts to access a grant have been futile, so he prefers to be in a boarding school because at least his needs would be catered for, that is food. Another learner from Mizamo said he was happy because his mother used to worry a lot about him while he was still at the special school. According to him, his mother now realises that he is independent and is able to interact with other children with ease. He added that while he was still at special school his mother used to be anxious when he wanted to play with neighbours.

One student reported that she was glad to have left the special school, as she is now confident about herself. She used to have a poor self-image about herself as a result of her disability and felt, in some ways; they were overprotected in special school and by their parents while attending a special school. This, she reported made them shy when they had to meet other children. She says her self esteem has definitely improved. The two from Masakhe say they are completely happy. Of course, they say they were embarrassed about being teased in the beginning. Once the other learners stopped teasing them, things were fine.

One even refused to go back to special school when his mother told him that conditions had improved and she thought he could go back. They claimed that there was also a lot of bullying in special school, particularly with boys.

One of them cited that sometimes the older boys sent them outside the school premises to buy cigarettes in the dark.

4.2.3.5 Parents

Parents seemed to be happy about the inclusion of their children. They argued that now they were able to see their children every day and did not have to worry. They were able to get to know their children better. One parent indicated that she was glad that she took her child out of special school as she had grown into a confident girl who is now able to interact with other children with ease. She continued that had she known earlier on about the possibility of her child attending local school, she would have moved her long ago. She felt strongly that children with disabilities should join mainstream schools at an early age and that it was a mistake for her child to be sent to a special school.

One parent, however, would like her child to go back, as she was not impressed with the level of learning taking place at Kusile. She felt that when she looks at her books she is not impressed by her performance. She alleged that on many occasions she noticed that she does not finish taking down notes from the board. She was of the opinion that while the learner was at Masakhe Primary School, educators took better care. Another concern for her was the fact that her child continued to be teased by other children. All the other parents shared their concern regarding teasing, especially during the first few weeks after their admission, but are now pleased that it has stopped.

4.2.3.6 Findings

Educators did not seem to be totally against inclusion of learners with visual impairment, but they had reservations about severely visually impaired learners. For them educating learners with visual impairments must not be too demanding on their part.

However, one educator made no bones about her feelings of despair regarding inclusive education as a whole. It is however interesting to note that the one educator who got training on inclusive education is the one who is very negative. The NCSNET/NCESS report confirmed that for learners with disabilities, fear and lack of awareness about disability among some educators remains a significant barrier. Coates and Mittler (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:71) concur with the findings of the NCSNET/NCESS by asserting that the inclusion of such learners becomes an issue related to the educator's beliefs and attitudes. Green (1999) in Engelbrecht et al, (1999:129) cautions that to support the inclusion of learners with special educational needs, educators have to be sensitive, not only to the particular needs of individual learners, but also to their own attitudes and feelings. The author went on to suggest that the educators may need training in how to identify and address special educational needs. Only once they acknowledge their stereotypes and prejudices are they able to work as change agents.

The issues of children being sent away appeared to affect both parents and learners as both parties expressed their pleasure in being able to stay together. The INDS (1997:) noted that it has been common for children with disabilities to be sent away to institutions for care or schooling, resulting in separation from their family, friends and peers. Educators at Masakhe indicated that the learners in their school were doing well and therefore their two learners do not want to go back to special school. One learner from Kusile, who was not even recognised by the educators as having a visual problem, definitely wanted to go back and so did another learner at Mizamo who shared the same sentiment. The issue of self-esteem and confidence seemed to be one positive factor emanating from attending mainstream school. The INDS (1997:7) commented that society still undervalues the capabilities of children with disabilities and regards them as a problem to be dealt with separately from other children's issues. The result, the INDS adds, is that they grow up to become disempowered adults, unable to take decisions, and solve problems.

The issue of teasing appears to be a major concern to all the three groups of people (Educators, parents and learners).

Negative attitudes toward different learners manifest themselves in the labelling of learners and learners with disabilities have fallen victim to this unacceptable behaviour (NCSNET/NCESS report, 1997:15). DPSA (2001:26) states that albinism, is not a disability, although most people with albinism identify with other people with disabilities due to the discrimination they experience. It states they usually have a normal life span they do not vanish, but cautions that they often develop visual disabilities that impact on their level of participation in everyday life.

Kwaaiman, (2004) claims that people with albinism are always treated with hostility and resentment consequently most of them would leave their communities and go elsewhere, hence the myth that they do not die, they vanish. They would in most instances be called "inkawu" meaning monkey, never called by their names.

Despite of the challenges that the educators are faced with they realise and acknowledge that people with disabilities are people too. They say need to treat the learners with "*ubuntu*". Goduka and Swadener argue that the principle of "*ubuntu*" is critical in building a theoretical and philosophical foundation and solid scaffolding for an inclusive education.

4.2.4 Barriers to inclusion of learners with visual impairment

4.2.4.1 Masakhe Primary School

The educators complained about their overflowing classes which make it impossible to give individual attention.

The educators felt that the fact that they had not been trained in dealing with learners with visual impairment or any other disability was a barrier. They were aware of their attitudes as they did sometimes call learner's names but acknowledged that their actions were wrong. They did highlight, though, that the name-calling is not only against learners with disabilities but with other children as well. They attribute their actions to bad working conditions, new changes that they have to catch up with and everyday frustrations. They state that if they could have smaller classes, there would be better commitment and willingness.

The fact that the orientation and mobility instructor is no longer coming to check challenges faced by the learners regarding their disability is a barrier. They also felt that sometimes parents do not co-operate the way they ought to. They made an example of a situation where one particular child would not wear his spectacles although he struggled to see. They tried to get the mother in to discuss this matter but to no avail. They claimed that the culture of parents only being called to school when there is trouble has made parents nervous to respond to schools. They also felt that maybe illiteracy plays a role in making parents uncomfortable in coming to school, especially if when they come, they are not met with respect.

4.2.4.2 Kusile Comprehensive School

Firstly educators stated that they were very concerned about the pace at which transformation was taking place and they were finding it difficult to keep up. They felt that they have not been prepared to deal with such learners and they do not know how to handle them. They felt they need training desperately to do justice to the learners and to change their mindset. They viewed training as being the solution to their stereotypes and prejudice against disability. Their educator-pupil ratio is very high, on average 1:75. They identified the buildings as unsuitable to accommodate the learners, citing the stairs. Non-involvement of parents, who do not respond to requests to come in, is perceived as a challenge.

They say most of their parents are illiterate and that is why sometimes they do not respond to their calls. They argue that maybe the parents associate being called to school with being reprimanded.

Educators expressed their concern about the level of poverty amongst the children in general. They added that with the learner with albinism, her situation is more visible. They say the parents cannot afford buying her cream and her skin is dry and developing sores.

4.2.4.3 Mizamo High School

Educators mentioned that large learner numbers affected their commitment. Vandalism of school property and the changes in general within the education system presented too much work. Training of educators on issues of disability was important for them to understand learners with disabilities better. They did not acknowledge their attitudes as a barrier but viewed barriers as being with the learners, parents and the education system. They complained about lack of commitment from the parents who never responded to their calls to come to the school. They identified poverty as being one of the barriers to inclusion with visual impairment. They argued that it was easy to notice learners with disabilities, whose financial status was poor due to their extra needs, compared to other learners. They say they have noticed a big difference in skin appearance between the learners with albinism that they have in the school. The one whose mother has an income has no skin problems; his skin is well looked after medically and also in terms of other school needs for example full school uniform and books.

4.2.4.4 Parents

2 parents reported the mainstream schools were not fully equipped for their children's needs. They said they hated the fact that sometimes the educators judged their children, focusing on the disability rather than giving the child a chance. One parent cited that when she approached the school for admission of her child, the principal turned the application down when he realised that the child used to attend a special school.

The principal did this without even asking the parent if she thought the child would cope or what kind of support the child would need. Intervention was sought from a doctor and a social worker to write covering letters and the child was then admitted. The parent said she was upset about the attitude displayed by the principal.

One educator from the school volunteered to the principal to give the learner a try and asked for her to be in her class. All these efforts eventually led the principal to succumb. According to the parent, this action was an indication that the principal was undermining her.

The parents reported that the classes were very large, which impacted negatively on the performance of the child. As a result of the big classes, to which the children were not accustomed, they took time to adjust and even then, individual attention was lacking. Most parents were unemployed and this limited their ability to provide for the needs of their children. Parents who are at least receiving social grants argue that it makes a big difference in the lives of the children and the rest of the family. Most parents, however, are not in receipt of social grants and even if they have some kind of income, it is erratic. They therefore strongly believe that any kind of assistance from the government is essential, particularly for the extra needs of the learners with disabilities.

4.2.4.5 Learners

2 learners claimed that assistive devices here were not enough or non-existent, whereas at special school they were abundant. They felt that if the assistive devices were available, they would do better. They mentioned that several attempts by their parents to access grants were futile and they felt that at least if they were receiving grants, they would be able to buy the skin creams. The creams at least improve their skin condition and thus they are not teased about their sores. They also indicated that at Khanyisa one was guaranteed three meals a day. Here, due to unemployment of parents, they sometimes go without food.

One learner from Masakhe mentioned that he always worried about his mother who sometimes cannot meet their needs through selling fruit and has to resort to stealing marine animals. This, he said affected him emotionally as on a few occasions she was arrested. Another concern for him was that every day after school he had to go to town to assist his mother in selling fruit; while other children were playing he was expected to work. Two learners complained about the big classes compared to special school. They said there was no individual attention. They also talked about the environment not being user friendly and having to sometimes rely on other learners for mobility. They said the support from the orientation and mobility instructor was useful.

4.2.4.6 Findings

On the whole, educators seemed to think that with training around disability they could do better. Eloff, Engelbrecht, and Swart (2002) argue that the absence of ongoing training of educators often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem and lack of innovative practices in the classroom.

They add that lack of educators prepared to provide quality inclusive teaching to these learners and the limitation of existing support structures both impact on inclusion.

The result has been that mainstream educators see inclusive education as being foisted upon them and they have raised many concerns regarding the implementation of inclusive education. There was a general complaint from the educators that the government is bringing about a lot of changes, some of which are not palatable. They seemed to suggest that the changes are imposed upon them. Swart and Pettifer (2001) in Green and Engelbrecht, (2001:4) state that at present, educators in South Africa are at the receiving end of a number of changes within education. They add that the educators are thus expected to make major changes in the way they understand teaching and learning in the process of adjusting to a new curriculum.

Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi (1999) in Engelbrecht et al (1999:70) outline the results of these changes by stating that educators feel overwhelmed and thus would require much support and guidance to ease their dilemma in order to assist them to remain focused. Another widespread complaint emerged that parents do not respond to calls to come to the school. Jernigan (1997:1) states that illiterate or poorly educated parents "are shy, insecure and end up leaving a very important role to educators." Parents have been allowed little participation in decision-making regarding their children's participation in learning programmes and regarding governance of centres of learning. The active involvement of parents and the broader community in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development. More specifically, they are critical components for effective governance of centres of learning and for facilitating community ownership of these facilities (WP6, 2001).

Some parents may feel intimidated and anxious about interacting with teachers. If, in the past, the school has only contacted parents to discuss problems, the parents may feel justifiably defensive and unwilling to become actively involved (Perla & O'Donnell, 2002:103).

The reluctance of some educators to admit learners with disabilities and the consideration of the parent's view appears to be problematic. The South African School's Act 1996, 5(6) is clear on consultation with the parents on decision-making processes regarding the placement of learners. It states that in determining the placement of a learner experiencing barriers to learning, the head of department and the principal must take into account the rights and wishes of parents of such a learner.

The intervention by an orientation and mobility instructor appears to be invaluable from the point of view of all three groups (educators, parents and learners). When the researcher attempted to find out what the respondents want the mobility instructor to do, it was evident that some of the things that they wanted him to repeat could be done by the educators or parents themselves. These included painting of boards, drawing large lines in the learners' books, and marking of doorways, for example.

Educators also feel strongly that parents should reinforce what is learnt at school for orientation and mobility however ensuring continuity at home has been a problem. Perla and O'Donnell (2002:103) argue that concepts and skills learned in mobility lessons become part of everyday life and are transferred to a variety of settings. Coupling orientation with mobility training, children are thus taught to move about their environment with self-reliance and purposefully. Furthermore they suggest that an effective strategy to deal with this barrier is to reach out to families to encourage parental involvement in reinforcing orientation and mobility. The key to creating an ongoing, positive relationship is to develop a plan at the beginning of the year to involve parents on a regular basis.

The issues of high pupil ratio and poverty seem to be problems shared by all the categories of respondents. The socio-economic factors seem to have a bearing on the learners. The NCSNET/NCESS (1997) report states unemployment and other economic inequalities as direct causes of poverty. As a result of poverty, families are unable to meet basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Learners living under such conditions are subject to emotional stress, which adversely affects their learning and development. The report adds that poverty stricken communities are also poorly resourced communities, which are characterised by educational facilities, large classes with high pupil-teacher ratios, inadequately trained staff and insufficient teaching materials.

Provision of assistive devices appears to be another barrier identified by all the categories of participants. The NCSNET/NCESS (1997:30) report identifies the provision of assistive devices as being characterised by the absence of an integrated strategy. The INDS, (1997:29) identifies the assistive devices as having a considerable impact on the ability of learners to access the curriculum.

The physical environment at the schools has been identified by the participants as a barrier for free movement of a learner with a visual impairment. The INDS, (1997:30) claims that the way in which the environment is developed and organised, contributes, to a large extent to the level of independence and equality that people with disabilities enjoy. REHAB (2000:2) cautions that safety is a concern when dealing with the visually impaired. Making sure that lighting is adequate, marking stairs doors to make them visible are some of the necessary precautions that need to be heeded when a learner with visual impairment is included.

Mizamo High School has a serious problem of security resulting in vandalism and break ins. Department of Education; (2004:8) identifies the safety of schools as being of vital importance. It adds that theft and vandalism pose a threat to educators and learners and to the entire schooling system.

All the educators feel strongly that training is essential to enable them to better understand disability. Eloff et al, (2002:2) argue that absence of ongoing in service of educators, in particular, often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem and lack of innovative practices in the classroom. The Paper by American Foundation for the Blind (2004) identifies competencies for educators of learners with visual visually impairment as including the following:

- Understanding of development patterns in learners with visual impairment
- Ability to design and modify core and specialised curricular for the student with visual impairment
- Knowledge of specialised technology
- Specialised books, materials and equipment used by the student with visual impairment
- Knowledge of specific policies and specialised resources
- Understanding vision loss and other related impairments
- Collaboration with families and other professionals.

4.2.5. Support received

4.2.5.1 Masakhe Primary School

The educators were of the opinion that support was received through sharing amongst themselves on how to be accommodating to the learners. They also strongly believed that the learners themselves could be a resource to tap regarding support. They made an example that one of the learners with disabilities mainly guided and helped them due to his outgoing personality.

So when they were not sure how to support him, he took the lead in showing them the way. This made them feel comfortable and they got to know him better. They realised that he did not want their pity. They say they felt that the kind of mother (supportive) and the kind of work that he does (selling fruit after school and getting to meet everyone) has made a positive impact on his personality. They again identified the support of the orientation and mobility instructor (whilst he was still coming) as vital. The other learners, according to them, also gave them support. They would report a learner with visual impairment who hid his glasses away and pretended to have left them at home.

They reported that the other learner was aggressive towards her peers and they assume that this was her way of coping with the teasing and the stares. They reported that in the beginning they were inundated with reports from other learners about how she had beaten them up, even when they did not tease her. The educators then facilitated that she became one of the leaders in class. The educators report that this action paid off as she was expected to be responsible and would therefore lead by example. The educators say the action did much in terms of improving her self-esteem and confidence and her behaviour changed completely.

4.2.5.2 Kusile Comprehensive School

As the educators were not aware of the disability of the learner no kind of support was received.

4.2.5.3 Mizamo High School

The educators allege that the only support that they received was emotional from each other through sharing the circumstances of the children with one another.

They identified the parent of one of the children as being supportive, would respond to calls to come to school and thus his child was progressing well whilst the other one whose mother has never heeded the calls was sure to fail as his needs (spectacles) were not catered for.

4.2.5.4 Parents

The parents who received social grants argued that the grant went a long way in catering for the extra needs. The parents were also of the opinion that the educators were supportive in the sense that they did not show any rejection of their children. They were accepted willingly at these schools, except the mother who had to seek intervention from the doctor. Even her child eventually settled in well without any victimisation. Some parents indicated that the support they received from the orientation and mobility instructor in terms of adjustments for their children was commendable.

4.2.5.5 Learners

The learners indicated that through befriending other pupils a great deal of support was solicited. They were assisted by getting notes from them as they struggled to transcribe from the board. Participating in extra mural activities like debates and sport helped them to become well known and the rest of the pupils came to know their needs and would volunteer to assist where necessary. Support from their parents was counted as being very helpful, particularly among those children who seemed to have settled in well in the mainstream and did not want to go back to special school.

It adds "the most important forms of support are available to every school: children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents becoming partners in the education of their children and communities supporting their local school."

What also came out strongly were parents having an influence on the child's confidence. Learners, whose parents were supportive and have instilled confidence in them in spite of their disability, seem to have coped well and made the work of educators a bit easier. Inclusion begins within the family. The attitudes of families are powerful forces that can mean the difference between success and failure at school, especially when the placement is in an integrated setting. There is no longer any doubt that a strong, secure family can do much to prepare a visually impaired child for the life in the sighted world (Bishop, <http://www.icevi.org/publications>). Dovey and Graffam (1987:102) point out teachers argue that parental attitudes towards the child and his/her disability and parental child rearing practices are crucial to the child's outlook on life. They add "parental acceptance of the child appears to be central to the child's ability to perceive him/ herself as a person worth." They conclude by stating that positive perception as a result of family attitudes can sustain the self-confidence of a disabled person in the event of social rejection.

The aggression of one learner at Masakhe Primary School was quite a challenge for the educators. Kornaska, (2003:52) asserts that a study conducted with teenagers with visual impairment showed timidity in social contacts as well as defensive attitudes. The educators' response with the aggression of the learner is indication that through educators supporting other educators' innovative ways could be explored in dealing with a problem.

4.2.6 Support Required

4.2.6.1 Masakhe Primary School

The educators felt strongly that the Department of Education should be at the forefront in providing the necessary support as inclusive education has many implications. They pointed out that educators from the relevant special schools should have been placed at their school to ensure the smooth transition of the visually impaired learners. They felt social workers have a role to play as they feel sometimes a home visit could help in assessing home conditions regarding the behaviour and condition of the learner. The educators were also of the opinion that parents' involvement is crucial in the process of adjustment of the disabled learner to the mainstream school.

4.2.6.2 Kusile Comprehensive School

Educators argued that the government expected them to do more work, while on the other hand they were taking away the resources. They made an example that they used to have a school nurse that visited them and they valued her support. They also felt that educators from the special schools those children attended could also help them in terms of awareness and education to better cope with those children.

They felt that parents were not supportive and they did not seem to value education as much as parents of previous times. Perhaps, they considered, parents probably see people with matric loitering in the streets without employment and so for them education therefore has no value. Educators also felt that the Department of Education did not appear to be serious about inclusion because after the admission of these learners, they should have followed up regarding their progress.

They argued that inclusion has financial implications for them as a school in terms of providing for assistive devices, to make structural changes and employment of more staff and wondered if the government would be willing to pay such expenses.

4.2.6.3 Mizamo High School

The educators felt that the Department of Education should provide support in order to make inclusive education a reality. They said other professionals like social workers will have to come to the fore to offer their services as the social problems of the learners are beyond their skills.

4.2.6.4 Parents

Parents felt that the orientation and mobility instructor should have continued with his visits in order to make sure that the needs of the children were catered for. They also felt that the fathers of their children have a very important role to play. One parent related that three months after the birth of her child, the father deserted him. He denied paternity and argued that there were no people with albinism in his family. She said from her meagre wages she had to single-handedly cater for the needs of her two children. She felt proud, however, that in spite of all the hardship, she has managed to provide for the needs of her child. She said she is also proud that through her influence and socialisation, her son has become confident and has a good self-image. One parent stated that when she approached the school for admission and was turned down the first time, she felt that maybe if her husband were on her side her feelings of disappointment and rejection would not have been so severe. Her husband watched her running around trying to sort out their child's education on her own. But she is proud that her suffering paid off eventually.

Those who were not in receipt of grants felt that they would go a long way in buying the required assistive devices and cream for their children's skins.

4.2.6.5 Learners

The learners were concerned about the financial position of their families and strongly believed that some kind of financial assistance would be helpful towards their needs. They felt that someone like a social worker was essential in discussing some of their social problems. They said in most situations the social worker knows where the resources are and can always refer when necessary. The situation for those who wanted to go back to special school however is different. Support from the parents was also highlighted particularly in situations of single parenthood.

4.2.6.6 Findings

Overall, the issue of the financial implications of inclusive education was evident. UNESCO, (2003:15) states that the process of change itself requires financial, human and intellectual resources. It continues by acknowledging that funding provision for learners who experience difficulties is always problematic. It identifies the shortage of resources as the major constraint in effecting inclusive education particularly in countries in the south. That the role of special school educators is important in sharing their expertise appears to be the general feeling of the educators. The WP6 (2001:21) states that special schools have a very important role to play in an inclusive system. The role of the special school would include providing particular expertise and support as part of the district support team to neighbouring schools. Collaboration of stakeholders appears to be central according to the educators. They believe that, Department of Education, Health and Social Development should be working very closely in dealing with the barriers.

The mothers of learners feel that spouse's support is crucial when you have a child with a visual impairment. They take the blame for giving birth to a child with a disability. The NCSNE/NCESS, (1997) states that many parents have a difficulty accepting a child with a disability. In patriarchal society, the mother is often blamed for the disability and fathers deny responsibility for the child.

4.3 FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

4.3.1. To explore the experiences and feelings of the learners, educators and parents about inclusion of learners with visual impairment into mainstream schools.

Most of the respondents did not have a problem regarding inclusive education. As indicated earlier on, however, their understanding of inclusive education was only about the inclusion of learners with disabilities. They therefore strongly believed that discrimination and exclusion of learners on the grounds of disability was not only against the ideals of the democratic government but against the principle of *ubuntu*.

Ainscow (1999:74) asserts that the Salamanca Statement states regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. The Statement explicitly outlines that inclusion is a right, a right that appears to be universal, seeing that the creation of inclusive schools as part of the creation of an inclusive society. Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 contains clauses that concern equality and provide protection against discrimination and oppression for all citizens. Clause 29 makes particular reference to education by affirming the right of all people to a basic education (Constitution of South Africa, 1996).

Educators therefore need to be made aware that inclusion is not only about inclusion of disabled learners, but the inclusion of all learners. It is essential that awareness be made a priority so that people in general get to know about inclusion and the emphasis be put on education as being a right for all children.

Lack of human resource development strategies has been identified by respondents as being a barrier. Eloff et al,(2002)states that the development of education service providers and other human resources is often fragmented and unsustainable. Furthermore, the absence of ongoing in-service training of educators, in particular, often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem and a lack of innovative practices in the classroom. They add that lack of teachers prepared to provide quality inclusive teaching to the learners and the limitation of support structures both impact on inclusion. As a result mainstream teachers see inclusive education as being foisted upon them and they have raised many concerns regarding the implementation of inclusive education. The WP6 (2001:18) suggests that ongoing assessment of educators' needs through developmental appraisals, followed by structured programmes to meet these needs, will make a critical contribution to inclusion.

4.3.2. Explore the challenges/barriers relating to the inclusion of learners with visual impairment.

The challenges faced by the respondents are huge and sometimes daunting. Lack of parental recognition and involvement appears to be a barrier to inclusion. The NCSNET/NCESS report (1997) states that in general parents have been given little recognition within the education and training system. The report claims that the disempowerment of parents of children with disabilities has been even more marked.

Parents, who have children who have been accommodated in special schools and centres, have in the past been actively encouraged to hand over total responsibility for education, remediation and in the case of children sent as boarders, the physical care of children to these schools and centres. (Engelbrecht et al, 1999).

The respondents view poverty as another challenge facing inclusion of learners with visual impairment. The NCSNET/NCESS (1997) identifies unemployment and other economic inequalities as the direct cause of poverty. It states that as a result of poverty families are unable to meet basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Learners living under such conditions are subject to increased emotional stress, which adversely affects the learning and development. Communities characterised by high levels of poverty often have to do with the bare minimum in terms of resources. Such communities are characterised by limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil-teacher ratios, inadequately trained staff and insufficient learning materials (NCSNET/NCESS report, 1997).

Attitudes in viewing learners with disabilities as sick and thus needing care, remains a challenge. The NCSNET/NCESS, 1997 report states that the medical model often contributed to particularly negative stereotyping and marginalisation of learners with disabilities as it saw them as dependent. It goes on to say that the medical model has shaped and contributed to exclusionary practices towards learners with "special educational needs" in the field of education. The report further states that prejudice based on race, class, gender and disability and other characteristics could be a barrier when directed towards learners.

The issue of charity and lay discourse on viewing disability comes out strongly in the terminology used by the non-disabled learners and educators when talking about learners with visual impairment.

The use of “*inkawu*” “monkey” when talking about the learners with albinism is reflective of the kind of thinking that still prevails. Educators were also referring to learners as being handicapped. DPSA (2001:14-15) states people with disabilities are very vulnerable to the misuse of language and terminology where terminology has a the effect of labelling people with disabilities, stereotyping them, discriminating against them, and ultimately creating a culture of non-acceptance of diversity. The researcher is therefore of the view that there should be an effort so that people in general are educated about whole shift in viewing disability. The schools most probably are the best places to do this as the learners would be able to take this information into the community. The disability movement also has a major role to play in awareness campaigns around the use of language and terminology with regard to disability. The use of media in advocating for this could a powerful tool.

Sometimes negative attitudes result from fear and lack of awareness about particular needs of learners or potential barriers, which they may face. For learners with disabilities, fear and lack of awareness about disability among some parents and educators remains a significant barrier. Many negative attitudes towards disability result from traditional and religious beliefs, which denigrate disability (NCSNET/NCESS ,1997).

Respondents appear to view the issue of lack of assistive devices as impacting on the quality of education. The NCSNET/NCESS report asserts that the provision of assistive devices has been characterised by restrictive costs, lack of knowledge regarding the services and facilities, which are available, centralised delivery and absence of an integrated strategy for the provision of effective devices and skills. This sentiment is echoed by the INDS(1997) which laments the uncoordinated and inappropriate production, supply and maintenance of assistive devices, as well as the high cost of imported devices. The barriers thus disable learners with impairments.

4.3.3. Explore the kind of support required in inclusion of learners with visual impairment.

Support from special schools was identified as essential by respondents. The WP6 (2001:21) states that special schools will have a very important role to play in an inclusive system. It adds that the new role for these schools will include providing particular expertise and support, especially professional support in terms of the curriculum, assessment and instruction, as part of the district support team to neighbouring schools, especially "full services schools".

Financial and human resources were identified as a challenge. The Open File (UNESCO) explains that the state of change itself requires financial resources. The WP6 (20012:37) claims that the high learner-educator ratios are putting a considerable burden on all professionals in the education system, both in teaching and management. It adds that expanding access and provision to disabled learners and youth of school-going age that are currently out of school, implies a steep increase in demands placed on these professionals. The WP6 (2001:37) states that the policies outlined in the WP6 will lead to the more cost-effective usage of resources in the long term when the proposed model is fully operational. However, in the short term, it is clear that additional funding will be required for "special needs" education - such funding will have to be sought from a range of sources, in particular the provincial education budgets and donor funding, both local and international (WP6, 2001:38).

Support systems within the school and outside have been identified as vital, particularly from professionals of other disciplines. The Open File (UNESCO, 2003:15) views support as including everything that enables learners to learn and outlines the most valuable forms of support as being available to every school: children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents supporting their local school. There are other formal types of support, for example resource centres and professionals from other sectors.

A coordinated approach to the provision of formal support is critical with services and agencies working together.

The following chapter will draw conclusions from the research and make recommendations regarding the inclusion of learners with visual impairments in mainstream schools.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at providing recommendations from the research study. The researcher will also provide her own conclusions as to the relevance of the research study.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educators need to be made aware of WP6, (2001) on inclusive education and its implications through in-service training and workshops.
- Educators need to be made aware that inclusive education is linked to other transformation processes taking place in the education system, it is not a separate entity.
- The Department of Education has an obligation to ensure that there is meaningful participation of parents in education.
- Awareness needs to be raised amongst learners, educators, parents and the community to change attitudes and stereotypes with regard to disability and difference.
- Lack of human resource in township schools needs to be addressed to ensure quality education.
- A close working relationship between the special schools' educators and those in mainstream schools should be encouraged.
- Parents of learners with disabilities need some kind of financial assistance, even if it is not a social grant in order to meet their children's extra needs (such as assistive devices).

- Partnerships between government, DPOs and NGOs are essential in dealing with barriers facing people with disabilities in mainstream schools.
- Collaboration with all stakeholders to address the issue of poverty is essential.
- A great deal of support for the educators, learners and parents to deal with the transformation, is vital.
- Success stories of inclusion from other schools within South Africa and Africa need to be disseminated to the educators.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Inclusive education seems to be a step in the right direction. Educators, parents and learners on the whole are positive about its benefits. However, there appears to be many challenges along the way, which need to be dealt with if it is to be achieved. The Department of Education has a major role to play in terms of providing the necessary support and resources. Collaboration amongst the stakeholders is the cornerstone for producing tangible results with regard to inclusive education. If inclusive education is to be sustainable, training must be planned and prioritised.

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APPENDIX A

P.O Box 344
East London
5200
3 March 2004

Mr Nxele
Department of Education
East London
5201

Dear Mr Nxele

PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH

As discussed with you, I have registered for a Masters in Social Science Degree. As part of fulfilling the degree's requirements I need to do a research project. I would therefore like to do the research at Masakhe Primary School, Kusile Comprehensive School and Mizamo High School with educators researching the experiences of the educators in including learners with visual impairments. I undertake to furnish the findings and recommendations to the Department of Education.

Thanking you in anticipation of a positive response.

Yours faithfully,

N.G. NGXATA

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS

Educators

1. How did you feel when you became aware that you are going to teach a learner with a visual impairment?
2. What is your understanding of inclusive education?
3. Why do you think inclusive education was introduced?
4. Are you aware of White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education?
5. Describe your interactions with the learners and their parents?
6. What kind of support did you give to the learners with visual impairment?
7. What kind of support did you receive within and outside school to ensure that the learners benefit from the curriculum?
8. What kind of support would you have liked to have received?

Learners

1. How did you feel when you were made aware that you have been accepted at the current school?
2. What is your understanding of inclusive education?
3. What do you think are the reasons for introducing inclusive education?
4. Tell me about your interactions with other learners.
5. What do you like about the current school?
6. What do you dislike about current school?
7. What did you like about Khanyisa Special School?
8. What did you dislike about Khanyisa Special School?
9. What kind of support do you receive at the current school regarding your visual impairment?
10. What kind of support would you have liked to have received?

Parents

1. Tell me how you went about to have your child admitted to the school
2. How did you feel when you approached the school for admission of your child?
3. What do you understand about inclusive education?
4. What do you think are the reasons for introducing inclusive education?
5. What kind of resources did you make available for the children?(technical, human and financial)
6. What kind of support did you receive either within the school or outside for your children?
7. What were the financial implications of making those resources available?
8. What did you like about Khanyisa?
9. What did you dislike about Khanyisa Special School?
10. What do you like about the current school?
11. What do you dislike about the current school?

