TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN AN EASTERN CAPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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KAROLA MCCONNACHIE

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ABSTRACT

Since 2001 the South African Department of Basic Education has been working towards implementing Inclusive Education over a twenty year period. This is in accordance with international trends in education. This study set out to investigate the implementation of Inclusive Education in a South African context by conducting a case study at an Eastern Cape no-fee-paying primary school. It looked at how the government policy, as set out in *Education White Paper 6* (EWP6) (DoE, 2001), is understood and being implemented by teachers at the Welcome Primary school. The study further investigated the introduction of the *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support* (SIAS strategy) (DoE, 2008a) to gain insight into how teachers identify and assess barriers to learning in an ordinary primary school. In addition it looked at emerging factors that could impact on the implementation of this policy.

With 16 years teaching experience in ordinary and private schools and 19 years experience in a special needs school as a teacher, head of department and then principal, I have personal experience of the crisis in the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education. This awareness provided the impetus and interest in researching Inclusive Education policy implementation. It is my view that only when we begin to grapple with the problems right at the source of the education crisis within the majority of the no-fee-paying schools that informed decisions about policy and policy implementation can be made. As I am able to understand and converse in isiXhosa, I was able to observe and experience the implementation of EWP6 and the SIAS strategy in a school that is an isiXhosa-medium ordinary primary school and similar to the majority of ordinary public schools in the district.

A qualitative research approach based within an interpretive paradigm using the case study method was used for this study. Semi-structured interviews, detailed field notes as well as documents generated by meetings and education conferences helped me to investigate and refine my research goals.

The research found that the implementation of EWP6 and the SIAS strategy posed a major challenge for the Department of Basic Education, and highlighted the significant gap between ordinary primary schools and special needs schools. However, the fact that there is

a partial engagement with the process of providing inclusive education, does present some measure of hope for a better future for those learners that have experienced the injustice of exclusion from education and society. The Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education will have to 'catch up' to other provinces in its delivery of every child's constitutional right to education in an inclusive school environment.

Factors emerged from the study that showed that the assessment of learners' barriers to learning with the resultant support needs was a relatively new concept, as teachers tended to rely on traditional classroom tests and simple informal classroom assessments to assess the learners. Teachers expressed a good verbal knowledge of learners with support needs but found it very challenging to put this verbal knowledge into a written document. In addition there was inadequate support from the District Based Support Team to implement the SIAS strategy. This study showed that the medical model of assessment was still being adhered to in the research district with little evidence of a move to a social model of assessment in terms of the SIAS strategy.

In addition, factors emerged indicating the serious impact that alcohol abuse has on children and the society in which they live. The evidence of increasing numbers of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in a single educational district is a matter of grave concern from an educational and financial perspective. It is my contention that this is a matter of national urgency and that the Department of Basic Education must confront the escalating problem of alcohol abuse and the resultant challenges of a large number of learners with serious barriers to learning that need to be included in the education system.

PREFACE

This thesis has been a remarkable journey that started after I had been teaching for many years in both public and private schools. My experience has ranged from preschool to high schools (16 years) followed by 19 years in special needs education. Exploring and grappling with the academic world for the past four years has deepened my understanding of Inclusive Education and provided invaluable insights into the complexity of education in South Africa. My research at a local no-fee-paying primary school has been an eye-opening experience and has left me feeling humbled at what I found. My working knowledge of isiXhosa and ability to engage with teachers and learners at this school has provided me with rich data. At times the findings were very disturbing and disheartening, but the individuals who are willing to continue against the odds led me to believe that there is a purpose for this research.

South African Department of Education changed its structure in 2010 and split into two departments. The Department of Education (DoE) became known as the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Throughout this research reference to the DoE and DBE refers to the South African National Department of Education or the National Department of Basic Education. If I refer to the provincial department in the Eastern Cape I state the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance of a number of people. I wish to express my thanks to the following:

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my inspirational mother, Monika von Plato (1927 -2008)

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ACRONYMS

CADE	Convention against discrimination in education (UNESCO)
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CSIE	Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
DoE	South Africa. Department of Education (up to 2010)
DBE	South Africa. Department of Basic Education (since 2010)
DPSA	Disabled People South Africa
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FAS	Fetal Alcohol Syndrom
HOD	Head of Department
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IE	Inclusive Education
IEA	Inclusive Education in Action
ILST	Institution Level Support Team
ISP	Individual Support Plan

LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSA	Learner Support Agent
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NCESS	National Commission on Education Support Service
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSDP	Office on the Status of Disabled Persons
PL	Professional Learning
SAFCD	South African Federal Council on Disability
SEN	Special Education Needs
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SIAS Strategy	National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
SNA	Support Needs Assessment
SNP	School Nutrition Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

My research investigates the implementation of Inclusive Education in an ordinary public primary school in a town in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. Inclusive Education is, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (henceforth referred to as UNESCO) defined as "an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination" (UNESCO, 2008, p. 3 as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010, p. 8). It is also seen as a strategy for achieving UNESCO's "*Education for All*" (hereafter referred to as EFA) which is not only associated with universal access to education but also about equity in education (Forlin, 2010, p.xviii).

My research looks at the Inclusive Education policy that South Africa's National Department of Education introduced in 2001, namely the *Education White Paper 6*, *Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System.* It is a policy that is considered to be a "post-apartheid landmark policy paper" and one that hopes to recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs within the education and training system (Department of Education, hereafter referred to as DoE, 2001 pp. 4 and 24). Although this Education White Paper 6 is a policy that meets most of UNESCO's guidelines on Inclusive Education, and purports to develop social justice and equity, there are serious implementation concerns (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007, p. v). These concerns are still evident twelve years after the introduction of this Inclusive Education policy.

In my experience the local socio-economically challenged public schools have not been better resourced since the introduction of Inclusive Education in 2001. This means that the implementation of a complex education system has the potential to be very challenging, especially where teachers are concerned who "experience the teaching of learners with

diverse education needs as difficult and unrewarding, and that they believe they are unprepared to support such learners" (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007, p 85). In addition the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape is facing major challenges in organisational capacity and implementation skills at all levels, making it very challenging for schools to implement educational policies while facing under-staffing, socio-economic challenges and infrastructure issues (Directorate of Inclusive Education Meeting, Eastern Cape, May 2012).

In 2008 the Department of Education introduced an assessment strategy as part of the implementation process of *Education White Paper 6*. The *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support*, referred to as the SIAS strategy, aims to overhaul the process of identifying, assessing and providing support for all learners to enhance their participation and inclusion in the education system (DoE, 2008a, p. 1). This SIAS strategy is primarily the tool whereby a learner's level of support needs is established by identifying and assessing the barriers to learning that a learner may be experiencing. During 2009 the SIAS strategy was rolled out and introduced to the teachers of the ordinary primary schools in the district where this research took place.

It is this stage of the *Education White Paper 6* implementation that is the main focus of my research: teachers' understanding of Inclusive Education and their assessment of barriers to learning using the SIAS strategy.

1.2 Contextual background

The research was carried out in an ordinary no-fee-paying public school - that will henceforth be referred to as the Welcome Primary School to protect the school's identity. My research study began in 2009 shortly after the SIAS strategy was introduced nationally and to this school. The study took place over the next four years as the process unfolded.

In 2009 I had 15 years experience in a special needs school and had attended a workshop at provincial level that dealt with the SIAS strategy. Following this I was asked by the Department of Education to assist with the workshops that introduced the SIAS strategy to the local ordinary primary schools. The training of the teachers was done using the department's preferred method, namely the cascade method, whereby the provincial department of education trains the district level trainers who then in turn train the teachers

from their district. This showed me that teachers are often trained by non-experts (personal experience) and very little support is offered after the training has taken place. Could this be a reason why Schoeman (2012, p. 2) states that "the majority of teachers are not skilled or positively inclined towards minimising the barriers that are experienced by learners and in classrooms"?

This work led me to become aware of the gap between ordinary public schools and special needs education and the challenges that the introduction of Inclusive Education would pose to both sectors. In the research literature available there is often a lack of discussion on the actual role that such ordinary public schools play in realising the goals of Inclusive Education (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 18). It is my view that only when we begin to grapple with the problems right at the source of the education crisis within the majority of the no-fee-paying schools that informed decisions about policy and policy implementation can be made. Bloch refers to "a crisis of outcomes, of delivery, of expectations, of dashed hopes and closed opportunities" (Bloch, 2009, p. 69). My personal experience of this crisis, particularly in the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education, has provided the impetus and interest in researching Inclusive Education policy implementation and teachers' assessments of barriers to learning.

1.3 Research goals

Motala (as cited in Bloch, 2009, p.70) refers to the fact that there are rigorous theoretical and conceptual policy reviews that cannot be underestimated, but that "they tell us little about events on the ground". It is these "events on the ground" within the ordinary public schools that need urgent research to understand the challenges facing the policy implementation around Inclusive Education. This has become the rationale for this study. The overall goal of this research is, therefore, to understand how teachers implement Inclusive Education using the SIAS strategy, with a particular emphasis on their assessment of barriers to learning. The specific goals of this study are:

- To describe and analyse how teachers at a particular primary school understand and implement Inclusive Education through the SIAS strategy. This is analysed in Chapter 4.

- To describe and analyse teachers' practices in assessing barriers to learning and what, if any, problems and difficulties they may be experiencing. This goal is addressed in Chapter 5.

- To describe and analyse emergent factors that could impact on policy. These factors are discussed in Chapter 6.

To reach these goals a number of research questions needed to be answered:

- What is the teachers' understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education?

- To what depth have the teachers engaged with Education White Paper 6?

- What is the teachers' understanding of the SIAS strategy?

- How do teachers understand barriers to learning?

- How do teachers assess learners who experience barriers to learning?

- What forms of assessment do teachers use to establish the support needs of these learners?

- What referral processes do teachers use at their school for a learner who experiences barriers to learning?

- What are the teachers' attitudes towards learners experiencing barriers to learning?

1.4 Research methodology

A qualitative research approach based within an interpretive paradigm using the case study method was used for this study which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The case study method using semi-structured interviews proved to be valuable in gaining answers to the research questions as set out under Section 1.3 and provided a rich description. My experience with a number of primary schools in the district, allowed me to make an informed decision in the selection of an ordinary no-fee-paying primary school for my case study which is discussed under Section 3.7.

The interpretive paradigm that was applied to this study allowed me to gain an understanding of the teachers' subjective world relating to their experiences within the school. To address the research goals this study initially set out to understand the teachers' interpretation of the world around them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 18).

1.5 Limitations/challenges within the study

This study is based at a single primary school and it could be argued that my findings cannot be generalised and lack "transferability" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 186). These limitations are in part addressed by the detailed data I was able to gather providing thick description for the reader to draw his/her own conclusions from the evidence that is presented (Yin, 2009, p. 189).

Some of the challenges experienced within this study have been the time factor and the restrictions placed on me by my work demands. The visits to the school were affected by my own work realities and later by the school's lack of a reliable water supply causing the principal to shut the school early on many days. This situation was not only happening at the Welcome Primary School, but was affecting other schools as well. These realities showed me that the school I had chosen for my study was fairly typical of the other primary schools in the area (refer to Section 3.7.1). A comparative study of a number of primary schools was not possible due to the time factor, but the common problems faced by these schools made me aware that one school could well be taken to be reasonably representative of similar schools in this education district.

1.6 Structure of the study

The study was carried out in three phases over a four year period. It is presented in the following chapters as follows:

Chapter Two is a review of the literature and a discussion of Inclusive Education concepts, discourses, policies and strategies.

Chapter Three sets out the research methodology explaining the approach, the framework and the methods that were used for this study. It also discusses the selection of the participants, data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical issues of this study.

Chapters Four, Five and Six analyse the data according to the three research goals. Chapter Four places the research within the context of current Inclusive Education policy implementation and teachers' understanding of the SIAS strategy. Chapter Five analyses teachers' practices in assessing barriers to learning and looks at the problems and challenges they are experiencing. Chapter Six then looks at the emergent factors that influence or even create barriers to learning.

Chapter Seven synthesises the results of the study, draws conclusions and puts forward recommendations that have emerged from the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In South Africa Inclusive Education research has developed considerably over the last 12 years since the National South African Department of Education (hereafter referred to as DoE) introduced its *Education White Paper 6*: *Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system* (hereafter referred to as EWP6) (DoE, 2001). This policy was seen to be the "cornerstone of an integrated and caring society" that would take South African education into the 21st century (Schoeman, 2012, citing DoE, 2001, p. 10). However, the implementation of this policy has come face to face with a number of challenges.

In the literature it is generally agreed that teachers are the most important component in the implementation of Inclusive Education, but educating them "to become the transmitters of a culture of inclusion is a formidable request in a climate of exclusion" (Slee, 2010, p. 16). Schoeman (2012) argues that one of the critical prerequisites for the implementation of EWP6 is the reforming of teachers' professional development. She further states that teachers need to know how to identify barriers to learning and then know how to address them by differentiating the curriculum, the forms of assessment that are used, as well as their classroom methodologies. However, twelve years after the launch of EWP6 she finds that in South Africa "the majority of teachers are not skilled or positively inclined towards minimising the barriers that are experienced by learners" (Schoeman, 2012, pp. 1- 2). This indicates that schools may not understand the philosophy of inclusion or the discourses that shaped it as "there exist competing discourses through which meaning and understandings differ" (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 81). A review of the literature confronted me with a range of definitions and opinions.

2.2 Inclusion or exclusion? Conceptual dilemmas

Does inclusion for some mean exclusion for others? Which children are included in the inclusive schools and which children are not welcome in these schools? Graham & Slee

(2008, p. 85) ask that we "interrogate the conjoined nature of inclusion/exclusion". These questions point to differences in the definition of inclusive education. For some it is looking at changing individuals to fit existing systems while others see it as changing systems to move away from marginalising and excluding individuals (Daniels & Garner, 1999, p. 1). Other authors describe Inclusive Education as growing out of the field of specialised education that viewed disability as "defectiveness and personal tragedy" and emerge as an acknowledgement that inclusive education is about all children and it "shifted its focus to consider the pervasive nature of exclusion in and through education" (Allan & Slee, 2008, p. 143).

In South Africa the introduction of inclusion into the education system meant there had to be a shift in language to accommodate the inclusion paradigm: the term special needs became *barriers to learning,* remedial education became *learning support* and the focus on changes in an individual became a focus on *system changes* (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005, p. 9).

Erten & Savage (2012, p. 221) found that in most studies that they reviewed, inclusive education can be defined as the physical placement of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Mitchell argues that inclusive education should be more than "mere placement" and should be about providing an adapted curriculum, adapted teaching methods, modified assessment techniques and additional support for the teacher in the classroom (Mitchell, 2008, p. 27).

Inclusion is also understood as a process. The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) in England defines it as: "The process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools" (CSIE as cited in Wall, 2006, p. 183). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (hereafter referred to as UNESCO) defined it as an "ongoing process" that is aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities of students and eliminating all forms of discrimination (UNESCO, 2008, as cited by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010, p. 8)). This idea of a process, something that is not yet complete, indicates that there are limits to inclusion. Education for all is in principle a good idea and expresses inclusion as a vision that is

limitless, but there is empirical evidence that inclusion has "a limit in practice" (Hansen, 2012, p. 91).There seem to be limits as to how inclusion can become wholly inclusive, particularly in an educational context.

These different views and concepts around inclusive education have developed over some time and to understand them I looked at the background and some of the discourses that shaped Inclusive Education.

2.3 Three discourses around Inclusive Education

During the course of the twentieth century many societies began to accept a more socially just system of education that integrated into society those who were marginalized or excluded because of physical and/or intellectual impairment, and began to think of educating these children in mainstream schools (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare 1999, p. 105). Before this, disabled children and adults were separated from general society, often "sent to institutions or poorhouses" (Young & Mintz, 2008, p. 499) and were the responsibility of health or welfare departments of governments. For example, all special schools in Britain up until 1971 "were controlled and run by the (then) Department of Health and Social Security" which, therefore, "confirmed the predominance of medical and psychological definitions of what was deemed in the best educational interests of the child" (Barnes, et al, 1999, p. 105). This medical understanding of disability meant that education for children with disabilities was constructed using the medical model where the disability was perceived to be within the child or adult and not in the society surrounding such a person. There was, and still is, even in the 21st century, the perception of disabled children as being "a burden, and their education as a matter of charity rather than rights." (Peters, Wolbers, & Dimling, 2008, p. 292).

Inclusive Education developed as a response to UNESCO's call for a more equitable education system. The literature that I reviewed for this study refers to a number of discourses that have shaped Inclusive Education. There are three that I will discuss in this study: the social justice discourse, the disability discourse and the special needs discourse.

2.3.1 Social justice discourse

Social justice refers to the human rights of people within a society – a person's right to a fair justice system, equitable education and equal access to shelter, food, health care and opportunities. UNESCO (2009, p.9) sums up the social justification of inclusion as based on three rights: "the right to *access* to education, the right to *quality* education and the right to *respect* in the learning environment". Children and adults with disabilities were previously excluded from basic human rights and, as stated under 2.3, were sent away or locked up.

Social justice in education came to the fore after the Second World War. The American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s is often seen as the beginning of the social justice education discourse, but Grant & Gibson (2010, p. 9) argue that it should rather be seen as originating from within the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1949.

The term social justice has a broad application and is seen by some as a stance that is both theoretical and philosophical and should involve an active engagement with the world (Brayboy & McCarty, 2010, p. 192). Similarly Nieto and Bode (2008) define social justice as "a philosophy, an approach and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity" (as cited in Cerecer, Gutierrez & Rios, 2010, p. 144). Both of these definitions imply that social justice is more than just words and must translate into an active implementation of the rights of all people by all people.

During the 1960s and 1970s education in many parts of the western world was mostly driven by social justice objectives and education was viewed as "a democratic conception" which intended to make education accessible to as many children and adults as possible (Peters, Wolbers & Dimling, 2008, p. 292). With education seen as being democratic it becomes "the vehicle for social improvement and for the valuing of difference and diversity" (Slee, 2010, p. 18 citing Touraine, 2000).

Many countries that have lived under oppressive regimes, like South Africa and Chile, have made human rights and social inclusion their priorities when searching for national reconciliation and social justice (Baez, 1999, p. 149). After the gross injustices of the

apartheid era, the democratically elected government of South Africa wanted to move towards an equitable society with an education system that provided quality education for all learners in order to enable them to reach their full potential and to participate meaningfully in society (Prinsloo, 2001, p. 344). Social justice in education can be seen as all citizens (children and adults) having the right to equal access to education. This right is now enshrined in the South African Constitution that was signed in 1996.

For others social justice pedagogy was seen as a means to liberation (political, educational and personal). An advocate of this form of education was the Brazilian theorist of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, who regarded social justice pedagogy as "liberatory" education. He sees it as a space where learners are not just passive recipients of knowledge, but are seen as interacting actively and critically with the world they live in and being treated as subjects rather than objects in their education (Brayboy & McCarty, 2010, p. 192; Ndimande, 2010, p. 99). This view requires learners to be actively engaged in accessing their rights, in knowing their rights and using them responsibly rather than being the passive recipients of a top-down education.

The social model of education, as opposed to the medical model, is based on the basic principles of social justice. Where the medical model of education focused on the intrinsic barriers to learning that a child was experiencing, the social model focused on the extrinsic barriers found within the system – "the environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers within institutions and society" (Allan, 2008, p. 46). This shift in focus became the basis of inclusive education. Dyson claimed that only inclusive education could deliver social justice (Dyson, 1999, p. 40), while Nutbrown & Clough speak of inclusive education as a "deeply political response – a moral response – to the movement for social justice" (Nutbrown & Clough, 2006, p. 138). This means that social justice has driven the development of inclusive education which is based on the principle that all students should have equal access to quality education (Ndimande, 2010, p. 93). Inclusive Education in the South African context is seen to have two purposes: "to give equal rights to persons of all abilities as well as social reconstruction" (Ladbrook, 2009, p. 41). The inclusive education policy that was introduced as EWP6 in South Africa in 2001 is, therefore, primarily based on the social rights model of education and emphasizes the move away from the medical deficit model.

Does this mean that social justice brings equity? What may be a constitutional right does not necessarily translate into everyone actually accessing that right in an unequal society. It is difficult to understand social justice ideals in a society that is unequal, where opportunities are not equally available to all learners and where the government of the day does not address these problems practically. In South Africa excesses in living are in evidence in all forms of media, corruption is rife and society is still coming to terms with multiculturalism, despite being called the "rainbow nation". There are significant disparities in financial resources between so-called advantaged and disadvantaged schools resulting in uneven access to education (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel & Malinen, 2012, p. 56). Although policy may be based on social justice and calls for equity, the implementation of such a policy will always be hampered by funding and political will. In the South African context many provinces lack the funds to recruit those learners that are still out of school to give them a chance to access their right to education (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 3). But it is not only in South Africa that these inequities exist. A report from the Centre for Equity in Education in Manchester in 2008 could just as well have been written about South Africa:

> "Put simply, it is inequitable that, despite generations of state education and successive waves of reform, those from disadvantaged backgrounds continue, as a group, to do least well in education and to have the most limited life chances." (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, Kerr & Miles, 2008, p. 2)

This does not fit with the views on social justice that have been discussed here. Inequities in society make it difficult to realize the vision of social justice. The OECD (2008) stated that equity in education for Special Education Needs (SEN) learners can only be achieved if all learners have equal opportunities in education. However, the current funding system provides very little support to schools to make premises and teaching accessible to learners who experience barriers to learning and to make inclusion possible (OECD, 2008, p. 283, refer to 2.7.3). This links to similar challenges found in the disability discourse.

2.3.2 The disability discourse

The term disability is defined as "the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers" (Disabled Peoples International, 1982 as cited by Priestley, 2006, p. 21). Disability

theory takes into account that the person has an impairment, but "concentrates on those social barriers which are constructed 'on top of' impairment" (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999, p. 2).

According to this view disability is socially constructed and society needs to acknowledge this to find solutions. This ties in with the view that different forms of disability are not "physical absolutes but social designations that are made by people" as they interact and have relationships with people with disabilities (Ladbrook, 2009, p. 20). Schneider (2006) defines disability as "an experience that arises out of the interaction between a person with a health condition and the context in which they live" and that disability "includes external environmental factors and internal personal factors" (Schneider, 2006, p. 8). This fits into the definition by the World Health Organisation (hereafter referred to as WHO) that suggested an integrated model of disability, i.e the "biopsychosocial model". This is a model that combines the medical and the social models, and would be a "more useful model" that provides "a coherent view of different perspectives of health: biological, individual and social" (WHO, 2002, p. 9).

Some authors feel that disability studies work towards exposing "benevolent oppression" that is found in schools and in special education. It is a cause for concern that no child appears to be able to receive any individualized "special" services within the education, social or health departments without first receiving a "disability label" (Young & Mintz, 2008, p. 506). Disability Studies are concerned with the *value* that people with disabilities have within society and often challenge society's concepts of what is normal (Barnes et al., 1999, p. 221). There are also questions asked of society as to who has the right to determine who is 'able' and who is 'not able' and thus "the labelers are questioned by those they have labeled" (Connor, 2008, p. 453). This is also discussed as "ableism" which is seen as "the belief that people with disabilities are inferior to those without them" (Connor & Gabel, 2010, p. 205).

In the field of disability studies there are concerns that disability can be created by the institutional practices within schools whereby the focus is on how different a child is with a disability from his/her peers and that this child needs to be 'normalised' through various therapies and interventions to help them become more like their peers (often the focus of

special needs education). This again implies that the child's difference is something negative, instead of being accepted and valued simply for who he/she is. Therefore, the social construction of disability that is created by the public impedes the acceptance of the individual with a disability, rather than seeing that "human variation is natural, not pathological" (Young & Mintz, 2008, p. 502).

There is a call to change the teaching of disabled learners with some authors advocating that teachers take a "proactive" stance rather than the usual "reactive" one (Connor & Gabel, 2010, p. 209). This is where there is a reaction to the disability and the prevalent notion that the disability must be cured or can be fixed (Soudien & Baxen, 2006, p. 155; Ladbrook, 2009, p. 20). (This again refers to the medical deficit model of education also mentioned in Section 2.3.1). By adopting a proactive stance from the beginning all learners have an equal chance at succeeding in reaching educational levels. This links to the Italian form of inclusive education where the "family approach" is used and all learners are afforded access to the single education system no matter what the individual challenges or disability are (Ferri, 2008, p. 47).

The disability discourse has to a large extent driven Inclusive Education policy development in South Africa with the Disabled People South Africa (DPSA), an advocacy group, with a history of anti-apartheid struggle and also struggle against how people understand and respond to disability, playing a significant role (Howell, Chalken & Alberts 2006, p. 49). Here in South Africa disability is recognised in that an Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (OSDP) was moved to the President's Office in 1999, giving recognition and funding to this office (Howell et al., 2006, p. 67). The South African Federal Council on Disability (SAFCD) was reconstituted in 1998 and has assisted disabled people in gaining more authority within organizations that provide services for them (Howell et al., 2006, p. 73). This awareness of disability and the need for equity in society, helped to formulate the Education White Paper 6 that was published in 2001, which hopes to develop education along the lines of the rights discourse as set out in the South African Constitution of 1996. Although there are issues surrounding the implementation of EWP6 and concerns remain, South Africa does not use disability as a "displacement device" (Soudien & Baxen, 2006, p. 152). EWP6 states that the policy will systematically move away from making categories of disabilities the organizing principle for institutions (DoE, 2001, p. 10). This policy advocates an inclusive three tier

education system consisting of ordinary schools, full service schools and special needs schools that hopes to provide appropriate support to learners with disabilities. This can still be criticized for creating spaces specifically for the disabled learners in full-service and special schools. Claiming to be one education system means that curriculum access should be of the same standard across all three tiers, but the term "special" is still used to describe education for those with disabilities.

2.3.3 Special Needs discourse

The social rights discourse and the disability discourse both show how education was seen as a right for all. With this growing social awareness came the realization that people with disabilities had a right to be educated. Education for those with disabilities in separate institutions or schools was the first step after children were taken out of poor houses and asylums (see Section 2.3). This gave rise to special needs education systems that were developed parallel to the mainstream education systems, hence the referral to a dual education system.

This dual education system was, and still is, used in many countries (amongst others the USA and England) where learners with disabilities are educated in special needs schools or within ordinary schools but often separated from non-disabled learners. The term 'special needs' is used to describe a learner who "has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision" (Rayner, 2007, p. 22). It was initially introduced to replace the term 'handicap'. The acronyms SEN (Special Education Needs) and LSEN (Learners with Special Educational Needs) were, and largely still are, most commonly used in many countries, including South Africa.

Special Needs Education focuses on the need within the learner i.e. the barrier lies only within the person which is also referred to as the deficit model or the medical model (see also Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). Van Drenth (2008, p.445) states that the "field of special education is full of histories that define and classify individuals according to specific concepts and along specific lines". As mentioned under Section 2.3.2, EWP6 wants to move away from categorizing disabilities, but South African special needs schools are still subject to defining themselves along specific categories of disability.

Although Inclusive Education has become the current terminology in education, the term 'special needs' remains firmly entrenched and is used in many countries. In Europe the term is still used in conjunction with inclusive education terminology in much of the literature as seen by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education that produced the "*Inclusive Education in Action – Project Framework and Rationale*" in 2010. This means that an agency for "special needs" is involved in developing inclusive education. South African policy uses both terms in the *Education White Paper 6* title: *Special needs education – building an inclusive education and training system* in that it speaks of 'special education needs' and then states that it is building an 'inclusive education and training system.' (EWP 6, 2001, title). This contradiction points to an interesting aspect of inclusive education: in order to include *all* learners within an education system cognizance must be taken of those learners whose disabilities are so significant that they would not be able to access education in an ordinary classroom without high levels of special needs support. For these learners smaller teacher/learner ratios, assistive devices, and an adapted curriculum are essential to attain their specific 'highest level 'of education, but at the same time we are again faced by the dilemma of the "conjoined nature of inclusion/exclusion" (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 85).

Special Needs Education is criticized for becoming an "industry" that creates jobs for thousands of therapists, psychologists, researchers, remedial teachers, trainers and even alternative therapists who are all involved in trying to overcome or "cure" disabilities or barriers to learning such as reading difficulties, behaviour disorders and many others. A certain amount of cynicism is apparent when noting writer, disability studies founder and disability rights activist, Irving Zola's reminder, that as long as it is possible to "live, and live well off the suffering and differences of others, the individualization and medicalisation of everyday life will continue unabated, with reward for some at the expense of many" (as cited in Titchkosky, 2008, p. 348).

Special education needs are also referred to by Barton & Slee (1999, p. 7 as cited in Hickey-Moody 2008, p. 362) as "a euphemism for failure". The very fact that well-established separate provision for special schools and special classes already exists in most countries, has been identified as a barrier to establishing inclusive education policy and inclusive schools (Rayner, 2007, p. 46). There is a feeling that there is a reluctance to let go of the old special needs mindset. Naicker refers to the tension created between inclusive education

policies and the old special education perspectives that are supported by “the large and resilient special school sector” (Naicker, 2006, p. 2). There is a sense that special needs educators hold on to their knowledge and expertise “within the church of SEN” and should open this up to be challenged and reconsidered (Slee, 2010, p. 19). In the South African context the inclusive education focus is located within the special needs directorates who are referred to as Inclusive Directorates which all have offices in each of the provincial Departments of Basic Education (hereafter referred to as DBE) and this “deprives the [inclusive education] initiative of much-needed political and administrative clout” (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 11).

However, there are significant numbers of parents of disabled children who support special needs education which they feel offers their children appropriate and specialized expertise in the form of special needs teachers and therapists. These parents argue that mainstream schools fail to prepare for their children’s needs appropriately and often pay only lip-service to ‘integration’ and thus resulting in the disabled child becoming “educationally and socially isolated” (Barnes, et al., 1999). On the other hand the disability movement feels strongly that “the special education system is fundamental to the disabling process and therefore must be abolished” (Barnes et al., 1999, p. 107). Barton concurs with this view when he states that “segregated special schooling set within distinct physical spaces can be viewed as representing the disabling barriers within a society” (Barton, 1999, p. 59). This infers that special needs education can exasperate disability and prevent integration into society. Others also refer to special needs education as resisting understanding of disability “outside of medical, scientific, and psychological frameworks” (Connors & Gabel, 2010, p. 203).

In South Africa the debate around special needs schools versus inclusive education is continuing, but according to EWP6 special schools will continue to exist as resource centres for surrounding mainstream schools. This could be attributed to the fact that so many South African children experience barriers to learning in the current system. Pillay & Di Terlizzi (2009) contend that “South Africa’s mainstream school environment does not yet provide the necessary structure to address learners with special education needs adequately (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009, p. 503). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (hereafter referred to as OECD) strongly supported the improvement of existing special schools in South Africa as part of the inclusive education policy, so that these special schools

could become resource centres providing support to schools, professionals and individuals (OECD, 2008, p. 280). Researchers Wildeman & Nomdo, were investigating the delays in the implementation of EWP6 and found that most of the people they could interview around inclusive education were from the special needs directorates. They stated that: "There did not appear to be personnel from public schools or any of the other main programmes with the requisite skills and qualifications to interview" about Inclusive Education (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 6). This raises a question around the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa: where is most of the inclusive education advocacy training focused? On special needs school personnel or on teachers in ordinary public schools?

These three discourses of social justice, disability and special needs all contributed to the Inclusive Education conversation and helped to shape the development of Inclusive Education over the past two decades.

2.4 The development of Inclusive Education policy internationally since 1990

Inclusive Education is a response to a call for a more equitable education system throughout the world. The postmodernist approach which questioned structures of power and proclaimed its "disillusionment with science and scientific method and the claims to universal truth" (Ladbrook, 2009, p. 18) was part of the shift towards a rights-orientated society. Gabel and Danforth (2008, p. 1) contend that from 1990 there was a global shift towards education as a human right. In 1990 the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* came into effect having been signed by 140 countries. The shift continued in the same year in Jomtien, Thailand, where UNESCO formulated an international agreement called the *World Declaration on Education for All* (hereafter referred to as EFA) (UNESCO, 1990). This marked the emergence of an international consensus that education was the single most important factor in the fight against poverty, discrimination and abuse of human rights (Ladbrook, 2009, p. 24).

UNESCO followed this declaration in 1994 in Salamanca, Spain, with its *Salamanca Statement and Framework for action* which stated that children with special needs must have access to regular schools as these are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes (UNESCO, 1994). This principle to include children with special

needs in regular schools was seen as a critical turning point in international politics of disability and education (Gabel & Danforth, 2008, p. 2).

In 2000 UNESCO developed the *Dakar Framework for Action* which reaffirmed the EFA goals of 1990 and was again signed by a majority of the United Nations' member countries (UNESCO, 2000). In 2006 the United Nations held the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* which promoted the protection of the human rights of disabled people, including the rights of disabled children to education (United Nations, 2006).

Inclusive Education has been developed in many countries around the world based on these United Nations conventions, declarations, statements and frameworks, but there has not been a uniform implementation and there are definite differences in the understanding of the concept of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2009, p.16).

2.5 The development of Inclusive Education in South Africa

During the 90's South Africa was influenced by the same international developments in education (see Section 2.4). UNESCO's 1994 *Salamanca Statement* came out the same year that South Africa became a democracy. In 1995 South Africa signed the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child.* In 1996 the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* was signed which gave every citizen the right to education. Also in 1996 the South African Schools Act was published ensuring that all children have the right to education. Any policy that was being developed at the time could not avoid the human rights focus of those years.

South Africa's education system was not only segregated by race under the apartheid system, but also by the type of disability. There was a dual system of education in place in which children with disabilities were educated in special schools while their non-disabled counterparts attended the ordinary schools. The white special needs sector was well resourced while other races were under-resourced with the disabled children in rural areas severely neglected and often not included in any form of education (EWP6, 2001, p. 9).

Two commissions, the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), were tasked

with researching inclusive education for South Africa (DoE 2001, p. 12). Their findings were published in 1998. As mentioned earlier, in 2001 the government launched its Inclusive Education policy in the *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education- Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (*EWP6). This policy set out to create a single education system for all learners over a twenty year period (Naicker, 2006, p. 1). This single 'inclusive' system proposed a three-tier education system (also referred to in Section 2.3.3) consisting of ordinary or regular schools, full service schools and special needs schools as resource centres, all following one national curriculum statement.

EWP6 was a progressive policy that defined Inclusive Education under a number of criteria:

- Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.
- Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
- Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases.
- Broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal settings and structures.
- Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners.
- Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning. (DoE, 2001, p. 6).

In addition EWP6 outlined six strategies to implement the policy over a 20 year period, beginning in 2001. These six strategies are:

1. the improvement of special schools to become resource centres;
2. to mobilise those children and youth who are outside the education system

3. the conversion of 500 primary schools to become full-service schools;

4. to change the ethos of mainstream schools to become inclusive schools by improving the system of identifying, assessing and placing learners who need support needs;

5. to establish district based support teams who would source expertise from within the education system, but would also go to local communities and organizations for help, as well as collaborate with other government departments (e.g. health, social development, public works and safety and security);

6. to prioritise the implementation of a national advocacy and information programme in support of the inclusion model (DoE, pp. 20 - 23).

After the introduction of EWP6, the next significant development was the launching of an assessment strategy in 2008 to identify support needs of learners. The fourth strategy of EWP6 states that there needs to be an improved system of identifying, assessing and placing learners who have support needs. In order to achieve this, the Department of Education launched its *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support* (hereafter referred to as the SIAS strategy) in 2008 as part of its EWP6 roll out over 20 years. This document was designed to assess the support level that a learner needed to be able to access the curriculum and achieve the desired outcomes of the National Curriculum Statement. This strategy was, therefore, to serve two key purposes in the implementation of an inclusive education system:

- to screen and identify learners who experience barriers to learning and development, and

- to establish a support package to address these barriers. (DoE, 2008a, p. 9)

It was acknowledged in EWP6 that the early identification and assessment of learners was of prime importance (DoE, 2001, p. 32). This means that if a school identifies barriers to learning as early as possible using the SIAS strategy and is able to supply the appropriate support, the school should be able to minimize the negative effects of these barriers to

learning. With this ideal in mind, it is hoped to reduce the funding required to support learners with high support needs. The strategy states that in the past assessment practices failed to outline the nature and level of support needed (DoE, 2008a, p.2). With the new system the correct assessment protocols are supposed to make the provision of support more cost effective and "supply something concrete to anchor and support funding requests" (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 30).

The SIAS strategy envisages three levels of support which correspond to the three tier schooling system that was proposed in EWP6. The first level is known as a *low* level of support which should be implemented in the ordinary schools; the second level is known as a *moderate* level of support which should be implemented at full-service schools (i.e. ordinary schools that receive more than average resources to support learners with barriers to learning), and the third level is known as a *high* level of support which should be implemented at the special needs schools also to be known as special needs resource centres.

In addition the SIAS strategy introduced "new roles and responsibilities" for the education support systems (DoE, 2008a, foreword). It expanded on the EWP6 idea of District Based Support Teams (referred to as DBSTs) that should be providing systemic support instead of learner specific interventions. These DBSTs should in turn help to establish Institution Level Support Teams (referred to as ILSTs) and help to train and support educators in multi-level classrooms (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 26). Both these teams are seen as essential to the implementation of Inclusive Education in South Africa. By 2007 it was found that provinces had not yet established DBST's as set out in EWP6, but had adapted their education support systems to "approximate DBSTs" (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 26). The SIAS strategy training was tasked to change this situation and the DBSTs were instructed to assist schools to set up the ILSTs and to introduce the new assessment and support procedures. To assess the learners using the SIAS strategy the education department published individual books for each learner requiring educational support in its *Learner Pack* (DoE, 2008b).

Another important policy document relating to special schools was also published in 2008: *Guidelines to ensure quality education and support in special schools and special school*

*resource centres (DoE, 2008c).*This document outlines the role of the DBSTs in greater detail than the SIAS strategy and in addition it states that all officials working in the education system should take on the responsibility of supporting learners (DoE, 2008c, p. 25).These special schools or resource centres should provide for those learners requiring the highest levels of support within the education system.

In 2010 the South African government changed its education department into two sections with all schools falling under the Department of Basic Education (hereafter referred to as DBE) and all universities and colleges falling under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The DBE continued with the EWP6 rollout with the publication of another inclusive education document: *Guidelines for full-service/inclusive schools 2010.* These full-service schools are envisaged to provide the second tier of the education system as outlined in EWP6 for learners that require moderate levels of support.

With the introduction of the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements* (hereafter referred to as CAPS) in 2011 came the introduction of yet another policy document to expand on EWP6. This document, *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through curriculum and assessment policy statements* (DBE, 2011), acknowledges the role that the curriculum can play in creating barriers to learning (DBE, 2011, p.2).

However, by 2012 the DBE had identified that teachers in ordinary schools lacked knowledge on how to identify and address barriers to learning in their classrooms and district officials lacked skills and knowledge on how to support schools and teachers (Schoeman, 2012, pp. 4-5).The implementation of Inclusive Education policy, therefore, remains a challenge in a number of areas.

2.6 Moving from policy to practice – challenges in the implementation of Inclusive Education

Implementing the inclusive education policies means that the inclusion of students with diverse educational needs in ordinary or mainstream schools is now “at the heart of education policy and planning throughout the world” (Savolainen, 2012, p. 51). However, translating policy into actual practice is proving to be a complex process. There is a view

that there will always be “a gap between the vision of inclusion and the achievement of inclusion in practice” (Hansen, 2012, p. 92).

By 2009 UNESCO reported in its *Policy guidelines for inclusion in education* that there are definite differences in the understanding of the concept of inclusive education among countries and across regions (UNESCO, 2009, p. 16). Some countries accommodate children with disabilities in separate classrooms within a mainstream school; other countries differ on which disabilities are to be included and which are to be excluded; others claim to be following the principles of Inclusive Education but are merely placing children with disabilities in an ordinary school without adapting curricula or providing adequate resources (Mitchell, 2008, p. 39).

A review of the literature from different international contexts as well as the South African context, reveals that over-crowded classrooms, teacher training problems, a lack of facilities and resources, and societies that have not yet come to accept that disabled people have the right to quality education, all work against the successful implementation of an Inclusive Education system (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006, p. 121; Smit & Mpya, 2011, p. 33; Winzer, 1999, p. 103).

In Britain it is interesting to note that the very champions of inclusive education in the 70s and 80s are questioning if it can work in education, saying that “even if inclusion is an ideal for society in general, it may not always be an ideal for school” (Warnock, 2005, p. 43 as cited in Allan, 2008, p. 3). Allan also refers to the exclusion of certain children from mainstream schools whose behaviour or disability would negatively impact on the majority of children at the mainstream school that they could attend if accepted (Allan, 2008, p.4). She refers to the “increasing talk of inclusion as an insurmountable challenge, whose possibilities have been exhausted” as being a cause for serious concern (Allan, 2008, p. 18).

Some of the concerns around inclusive education implementation also relate to the perception that the EFA (Education for All) initiatives as set out in the Dakar Framework could be seen as trying to impose the “west is best” approach to the detriment of indigenous systems and warn against the “McDonaldization” of education (Gabel & Danforth, 2008, p. 7, citing Tamatea(2005) and Alur (2007)).

Four of the main challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education policy are discussed in the next sections.

2.6.1 Teachers' understanding of Inclusive Education

Across the world teachers are the ones who are required to implement inclusive education in their classrooms and it is the teachers' understanding and attitude that seems to make or break this implementation process.

Much of the confusion surrounding the understanding of the inclusive education philosophy seems to arise out of the confusing demands made on teachers. On the one hand teachers must produce outstanding academic results while on the other they must include children who are unable to achieve these results because of serious barriers to learning (Adler & Reed, 2002, p. 8). This is the case in India, a country that has made great strides towards a more inclusive society, but where inclusive education implementation is hampered by the attitudes of teachers towards including children with special needs in the mainstream schools which are largely driven by the need to obtain high levels of academic achievement. By including children with disabilities the teachers fear that these academic standards would be lowered, and would, therefore, prefer for these children to be taught in a separate system (Hodkinson & Devarakonda, 2009, p, 91). It is felt that these challenges within the education system of India could be improved with teacher training that gives teachers insight into inclusive education practices (Chander, 2008, p. 77; Hodkinson & Devarakonda, 2009, p. 97). A similar situation exists in Vietnam which is a country that turned its literacy levels around from 6% to 94% within 50 years. With this emphasis on literacy achievement, the inclusion of learners with disabilities who do not perform as well as other learners, is an issue and teachers are "bewildered" by the Inclusive Education programme and encounter difficulties with its implementation, especially with large class sizes of 40 – 50 learners per class (Rydstrom, 2010, p. 95).

Instead of seeing the opportunities that an inclusive system could offer, teachers are overwhelmed by the demands they feel are imposed on them by a new system that they do not understand in essence. Bourke (2010, p. 185) states that in Queensland, Australia, teachers are finding their work "stressful" while struggling with inclusive education reforms and often not understanding what the discourse around inclusive education means. This

points to the argument that inclusion is not necessarily the opposite of exclusion which is how many teachers interpret it, but rather that the two are “interrelated processes and their interplay constantly creates new inclusive/exclusive conditions and possibilities” (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011, p. 36).

A number of comparative studies of teachers’ attitudes show similar confusing findings. Generally teachers appear to endorse inclusive education, but they do not like to implement it in their own classrooms. In addition, teachers vary their opinion on inclusion according to the type of disability they must include in their teaching practice (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011, p. 333). In a comparative study done in South Africa and Finland, it was found that teachers could be positively inclined towards persons with disabilities in general, but were quite critical of actually teaching children with disabilities in mainstream schools (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel & Malinen, 2012, p.65).

An interesting factor emerges when a country has successfully implemented inclusive education. Italy introduced a single inclusive education system in the 70’s. After nearly 40 years of inclusion the studies on teacher attitudes in Italy show that teachers are very positive about inclusion and that direct experience with disabled learners has led to more positive attitudes towards inclusion (Ferri, 2008, p. 45). This indicates that the less contact teachers have with disabled learners, the more likely they are to have negative attitudes towards including such learners. Ferri also cites a number of studies on teacher attitudes that all agree that “knowledge and direct and sustained experience with students with disabilities leads to greater confidence and greater confidence leads to a more positive attitude toward inclusion” (Ferri, 2008, p.46).

This again brings in the debate around the fact that it is the teachers who actually implement policy. Inclusive Education has in many ways challenged traditionally held views on how teachers perceived teaching. Accommodating learners with different support needs has always been a challenge, but the problem was usually seen to be within the learner, who then had to be “fixed” to fit in with the average children in a classroom (refer to Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). There was little or no cognizance of the barriers to learning being within the system or even caused by the teachers. Many teachers find change difficult and retraining teachers is a challenging task as so many “find it threatening to have

to change their tried and tested teaching methods to accommodate disabled children" (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2008, p. 36). In addition there is the issue of "the expert" teacher, especially amongst the special needs teachers, which implies that "the expert" can fix the problem, but this creates dependency and segregation for the child with a disability and his/her family (Young & Mintz, 2008, p. 504).

In my experience many socio-economically challenged schools in South Africa have not been better resourced since the new legislation has come into effect. Therefore, implementing a complex education system, such as inclusive education, has the potential to be very challenging, especially where teachers are concerned who "experience the teaching of learners with diverse education needs as difficult and unrewarding, and that they believe they are unprepared to support such learners" (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007, p. 85).

These problems within Inclusive Education are not only occurring in South Africa, but worldwide and Inclusive Education is facing many challenges. Allan (2008, p. 25) argues that inclusive policies and legislation "appear to always lead to the repetition of exclusion and add to the confusion, frustration, guilt and exhaustion experienced by teachers". Many teachers in South Africa feel they were never consulted when the SIAS strategy was drawn up and introduced to them – the modules were not based on teachers' actual needs and requests (Nel, Müller, Hugo, Helldin, Bäckmann, Dwyer & Skarlind, 2011, p. 89). But no matter what the challenges are, in the end it all rests on the teacher because he/she is the one that has to implement the principles of Inclusive Education. As Cor Meijer states: "If the teacher is not able to educate a variety of students in the mainstream classroom, all the good intentions for inclusive education are worthless" (Meijer, 2011).

2.6.2 Teacher development and training

Teacher education has been acknowledged to play a vital role in the implementation of new policies. Inclusive Education policy is no exception. As stated earlier, in the South African context the introduction of inclusive education was hailed as "a cornerstone of an integrated and caring society" (Schoeman, 2012, p. 1) and there was much optimism that its implementation would be achieved successfully. However, twelve years after the introduction of EWP6 the majority of teachers feel they were never trained, have very little information about EWP6 and do not understand the policy. This indicates that the teacher

training for this policy has not been achieved. Various authors propose different reasons for this situation.

If a government tries to transpose a new paradigm like inclusive education onto a traditional educational system that does not tolerate change or alternative pedagogies, it can lead to "epistemological dissonance posing an impossible undertaking (Forlin, 2010, p. 250). Similarly Naiker (2006) states that one of the problems relating to the implementation of Inclusive Education policy in South Africa relates to the fact that the training of teachers was done by bureaucrats who lacked the understandings of the epistemological issues that influenced thinking, practices and transformation in education (Naiker, 2006, p. 2). A matter of concern is that specific EWP6 training did not actually take place in some provinces. It was found that teachers were gaining their information on EWP6 only when attending other training courses – inclusive education training was only "piggybacking" on other training programmes (Ntombela, 2011, p. 9).

Training in general seems to be a problem in South Africa. Whenever a new policy is to be introduced to schools the Department of Basic Education favours the approach whereby a few teachers or professionals are initially trained in the knowledge and skills required to implement a policy and then they in turn go back to train their colleagues – this is referred to as the cascade method. It was found that this method was not successful when used by the South African Finnish Cooperation Programme (Scope) as those teachers at the lower levels of this cascade model were not as skilled as those who were initially trained (Oswald, 2007, p. 154). In an earlier study it was found that the cascade model does not work where there is an authoritarian management style and where there is distrust and disagreement amongst staff (Engelbrecht & Oswald, 2005, as cited in Oswald, 2007, p. 154).

The cascade model ties in with the assumptions by the national education body that the provincial education departments will carry out all training as instructed by the national body. This "top-down" approach has a similar outcome to the cascade approach. Oswald (2007) contends that the "top-down transformational process of change that currently exists in education in South Africa continues to nurture a resistance to ownership of school and teacher change". As a result of the methods used to train in-service teachers and the lack of ongoing support, many teachers are overwhelmed and have "lost the passion and

drive" to teach (Oswald, 2007, p. 153). The sense of being overwhelmed could stem from the misunderstandings that arise when a policy is introduced incorrectly. The lowest level of the cascade method is misinterpreting what the policy actually proposes and thereby the teachers at that level will not be able to make informed decisions about implementation let alone make a paradigm shift in their understanding of the nature and purpose of teaching and learning (Ntombela, 2011, p. 10). To simply complete forms because someone told them to do so, cannot constitute effective implementation.

In contrast to these methods are the "hands-on" approaches that are being advocated for teacher training internationally. Already in 1997 the NCSNET/NCESS Commission stated that teacher training should focus on "developing the self-sufficiency of teachers within the context of the school where they are presently working (DoE, 1997, as cited in Oswald, 2007, p. 154). Then in 2002 the successful Danida pilot project for the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa quoted an evaluator as saying that school-based training had been extremely effective and that training that took place away from the schools was not as successful (DoE, 2002, p. 17). Professional learning (PL) should always be context specific and must relate directly to teachers' work, as well as be appropriate and flexible enough for teachers to feel confident about accessing the training for their needs (Forlin, 2010, p. 248). Teachers need opportunities to be able to learn in their own work context and in a collaborative environment in order to be effective (Schwille, 2007, as cited in Ntombela, 2011, p. 12). A comparative study done in South Africa and Sweden shows that "teachers' attitudes can be changed if they are provided with well-planned information and the necessary support structures" (Nel, Müller, Hugo, Helldin, Bäckmann, Dwyer, Skarlind, 2011, p. 89). With a number of studies indicating the advantages of context-specific training, questions must be raised as to why the Department of Basic Education is still using the cascade method to train teachers.

2.6.3 Cultural belief systems that affect the implementation of inclusive education

The literature shows that many countries find that the implementation of inclusive education is hampered by cultural belief systems. This occurs in a wide range of countries including South Africa. For instance, one of the main obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education policies in India is the philosophy of *karma* which sees disability as a

result of past life actions which would stigmatize a child with a disability, particularly in a rural setting (Gabel & Chander, 2008, p. 72). In Vietnam too, belief systems that place disability as being 'caused by ancestors' for various moral transgressions, play a role in the perceptions of Vietnamese people of a child with a disability and can hamper the child's progress.(Rydstrom, 2010, p. 88).

In Namibia the implementation of inclusive practices in society is moving very slowly and the researchers feel that socio-cultural factors could be the cause for the "sluggish pace" of implementation. They contend that cultural perceptions of disability influence how people with disabilities will be treated within their societies and could hamper the introduction of inclusive education (Haihambo & Lightfoot, 2010, p. 84). Similarly in Zimbabwe these challenges are also present where "local beliefs, superstition, and customs cause people to look down upon people with disabilities" (Badza, Chakuchichi & Chimedza 2008, p. 60), making it difficult to include children with disabilities in the mainstream schools successfully.

Many of the challenges and perspectives found in other countries are also present in South Africa. It was reported that a grandfather of a disabled child felt the child "would not improve until the mother had satisfied the ancestors by slaughtering an animal" and that a pregnant teacher would not teach a child with a disability as she believed that the child's disability "would be passed on to her unborn child" (DoE, 2002, p. 62). It was found that the language used to refer to disabled people was insulting and that parents were afraid to inform teachers of their children's disabilities for fear of exclusion (DoE, 2002, p. 63). Teachers at rural schools are likely to see "the untypical learner as an outsider who deserves to be taught separately from the rest of the learner population" (Ntombela, 2011, p. 13). These attitudes hamper the implementation of a policy that advocates the identification and dismantling of exclusion (Slee, 2010, p. 18).

In addition to these belief systems there is still the belief amongst some parents, particularly in rural communities, that teachers have the sole responsibility of ensuring that their children are able to perform well at school (Smit & Mpya, 2011, p. 31). Inclusive Education advocates co-operation between the parents and the school, but this is hampered by these attitudes and belief systems.

2.6.4 Financial implications for the implementation of Inclusive Education

There are serious challenges posed by financial influences on education in general. Implementing an educational paradigm such as inclusive education of necessity carries with it the financial implications that are embedded in such a philosophy. With the worldwide economic recession of recent years, UNESCO has seen a reversal in the gains made in the education of the most vulnerable as they are usually the first to drop out of schooling when basic needs can no longer be met and this may mean that the 2015 targets set by UNESCO will not be achieved as a "combination of global food crisis and financial crisis has worsened the environment for achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals (UNESCO, 2010, p. 24).

When examining education during previous decades, Peters et al (2008, p. 292), point out that the 80s and 90s are the decades in which "education was driven by the human capital paradigm" with a strong focus on training children for the workplace and for "employability." This created more pressure within education systems when they had to accommodate those children with disabilities as it was (and still is) thought that they pose challenges in an educational environment where "employability" becomes the goal, and it is generally believed that children with disabilities leave school with less academic qualifications and skills than their peers (Barnes et al, 1999).

In South Africa criticism of policy implementation that takes little account of the realities on the ground is strong. Policy documents may "be admirable in their sentiments and elegant in their formulation" but they give no strategies for transforming the actual conditions on the ground (Christie, 1999, p. 165). In 1997 Greenstein already warned that this "structural disjuncture between power and accountability" would remain a source of tension in education in South Africa (cited by Christie, 1999, p. 165). The OECD found that there was a lack of funding norms and standards for the implementation of inclusive education in the provinces. This meant that in some of the poorer provinces the implementation of inclusive education was seen as a "luxury" (OECD, 2008, p. 281). Others see the difficulties of implementing inclusive education as originating in the "deleterious effects of the apartheid legacy" which focused on the "deficit notions of difference", as well as in the current

education structures that “lack the resources, capacity and even the will to prioritise inclusive education” (Hougaard, Masondo, Serra & Walton, 2010, p. 9).

However, Inclusive Education has been seen by some developing countries to be less resource intensive, and is a means of providing education to more children (Armstrong et al., 2011, p. 32). Similarly EWP6 is seen as a “conserver of resources” because of the way it mainstreams disability, establishes district based support teams and the long timeframe for its implementation (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 29).

It is a fact that special needs schools are expensive to run in that they require assistive devices, infrastructure that physically supports children with high levels of support needs and specialist staff particularly for those in need of high medical care. In the South African context there are serious problems relating to funding for ordinary public schools that lack even the basic infrastructure for children who do not require any additional support. To ask these under-resourced schools to adapt their buildings, grounds and classrooms to accommodate learners with support needs is difficult. These schools are not adequately funded by the state to meet basic needs like sanitation, or water and electricity supplies. In addition many of these schools were architecturally never designed to accommodate learners with support needs, as they were built during a time when special schools existed for those children who had support needs.

Ordinary public schools struggle to raise funds as they are no-fee-paying schools and are left to rely on government funding to maintain and develop their infrastructure. The government funding is significantly less per capita for ordinary schools than for the special needs schools. In 2007 it was reported that “the average expenditure on learners in special needs education institutions is more than four times that of the corresponding investment in public schools” (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 15). When comparing per learner expenditure at an ordinary school and a special school in 2012, I found the special school received nearly eight times more per learner (my personal experience). This expenditure is now based on the level of support needs and the way learners with support needs are “weighted”. For example, a child with autism is weighted as being equivalent to six ordinary learners in terms of his/her needs; a child with severe intellectual disability is weighted as three ordinary learners.

This weighting system is supposed to increase the level of inclusion as ordinary schools will now benefit from including learners with disabilities on their enrollment. If a school with 200 learners includes five learners with autism, their numbers are increased by 30 and not only five, as each of these learners is weighted as six. With the higher enrolment numbers the school is eligible for more funding and more teachers. The realities of including such learners are, however, not always considered. A learner with severe autism can again face exclusion as his/her needs cannot be met in large classes. The possibility of misusing assessment strategies to gain more funds is high and can lead to exclusionary practices within the education system, especially in schools that are seriously under resourced and under staffed.

2.7 The role of assessment in the implementation of Inclusive Education

Assessment forms an integral part of inclusive education systems throughout the world. It is considered essential that the support needs of a learner are established to be able to provide each learner with an optimal education, but at the same time it is a highly sensitive aspect of inclusive education implementation.

If the assessment occurs within the medical deficit model of education then the focus is on the intrinsic barriers experienced by the individual learner. If the assessment is within the social model the focus is on the systemic barriers that impact on a learner. Although assessment is important in the process of identifying support needs, there is a danger that the end result is again exclusion rather than inclusion. This is borne out by the report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2010) which raises concerns around assessing children when there is "a lack of culturally appropriate assessments, pervasive prejudice and limited ability of the education system to accommodate diversity" as this is resulting in "gross overrepresentation of children in segregated special classrooms and schools" (United Nations, 2010, p. 10). In South Africa there were warnings about the SIAS strategy when it was first implemented in 2008. Despite it introducing procedures to promote inclusion it was felt that "care must be taken that it does not become an exclusionary or segregating tool" (Schoeman, 2008, p. 10).

When considering assessments for support needs for learners experiencing barriers to learning there are critical questions that need to be considered:

- Who carries out the assessment process?
- How is assessment done?

2.7.1 Who carries out the assessment process?

Countries implementing inclusive education have developed their own systems of assessment to determine the levels of support and the forms of intervention that are needed to help learners. The question as to who takes responsibility for the assessment and what forms this assessment takes can only be answered within the context of each country's education system.

In most countries a multidisciplinary team assesses learners who experience barriers to learning. These teams are usually made up of teachers, therapists, psychologists, medical practitioners, local education officials and the parents of the learner. There is, however, much debate internationally around the assessment procedures and who conducts these assessments. Is this assessment done within the new inclusive parameters or is it again leaning towards the medical deficit model that labels the child rather than the system?

In Sweden there are concerns that the schools that carry out the assessments for support are becoming "arenas for categorization" where a medical diagnosis is used to assess learners with special needs and that this form of assessment overlooks the authentic support needs of the learners (Isaksson, Lindqvist & Bergstrøm, 2010, p. 135). In England the Local Education Authority (LEA) carries out assessments to establish learners' support needs by asking various professionals who work with the learner to give their views. The outcome of this assessment is recorded in a *statement of needs.* However, it is felt that the process that should ensure a child's needs are met does not always result in positive outcomes (Wall, 2006, p. 137).

In South Africa the SIAS strategy advocates that the District Based Support Teams (DBSTs) assist the schools' Institution Level Support Teams (ILSTs) in the assessment process. A learner is first assessed by his/her class teacher because this teacher is the person in daily contact with the learner. The teacher uses standard classroom assessment methods and from these results draws conclusions about the learner's support needs. Once a learner has been identified by the teacher as needing higher support needs, the teacher will consult the

school's ILST. Depending on the severity of the barriers experienced, the ILST will request the assistance of the DBST and they in turn can consult with various professionals to assess the support needs of a learner. This collaborative assessment leads to an *official decision* which then determines the interventions that will be implemented to support a learner (DoE, 2008a, p. 31).

In the South African context of inclusive education implementation, there is a strong move to recognize the role of parents in the assessment process and the SIAS strategy regards parents "as equal partners" in the process of identification and assessment (DoE, 2008a, p. 95). Parents are recognized as being able to provide insight into the child's strengths and weaknesses as well as into the home circumstances and the environment in which a child lives (DoE, 2008a, p. 12). There are a number of challenges that emerge in those South African schools where parents have traditionally been excluded or discouraged from being involved in their children's schooling. Research shows that many parents "are neither willing, nor able, due to a variety of reasons, to support their children in the schooling situation" (Ladbrook, 2009, p. 68) and that this is sometimes due to "financial, transport or logistical factors (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009, p. 503). In addition, the levels of support available to a learner are often not understood by the parents, particularly if the parent is illiterate (personal experience). In addition the parents of today's children have not experienced education the way their children are currently experiencing it (Ladbrook, 2009, p. 121). The parents are, therefore, often not aware of the importance of their role in the assessment process and their potential to support their children.

2.7.2 How is assessment carried out?

Traditionally school assessment revolved around testing and examinations to establish learners' levels of knowledge. In the South African 2011 *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity* assessment is seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning process (DBE, 2011b, p. 12). In order to establish the levels of support that a learner needs, schools should have functioning ILSTs that use various documents available within the education system. The documents are the teachers' classroom assessments, the *Learner Profile* and the *SIAS Toolkit* which is contained in what is termed the Learner Pack (DoE, 2008b).

2.7.2.1 Classroom assessments

Teachers are expected to assess their learners using various strategies and to record these assessments. According to the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R - 12 assessment is "a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners" (DBE, 2011a, p. 3). Another government policy states that assessment should serve the purpose of informing teachers, parents and district officials of what support a learner needs to progress to another level (DBE, 2011b, p. 12). Multi-level teaching and differentiated assessment is proposed in the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity,* but there are concerns about the levels of teacher training to implement these concepts (Schoeman, 2012, p. 2).

There are three proposed types of alternate assessment that teachers could use to assess learners with barriers to learning which will include those learners with disabilities. These are for: (i) learners with a significant cognitive disability; (ii) learners with disabilities working on grade-level content but require more time to master the content; and (iii) learners with disabilities or learning difficulties that are same grade-level but need alternate formats of testing (such as Braille text, electronic equipment, amanuensis, readers and more) (DBE, 2011b, p.19). This is to assist teachers in their assessment processes of learners that are experiencing barriers to learning and should make the promotion of these learners possible with the relevant support.

If a learner should not meet the requirements for promotion he/she can only be retained once per phase and if that does not help to improve the learner's ability to meet the requirements, the learner will be progressed to the next grade. There is considerable debate around the issue of retention in no-fee-paying schools that have little or no support for learners who fail to meet the grade requirements. Many teachers feel that district officials are being irresponsible and ignorant when they refuse to retain learners as they feel those learners who are not coping will "flounder in the next year" and never have an opportunity to consolidate their skills and knowledge (Ladbrook, 2009, p. 113). These schools should be providing a programme of action to address any backlog a learner is experiencing and the teacher must provide evidence and information of any support and intervention that has been provided for the learner, including psychological and medical reports. In addition a

teacher should have a record of how appropriate, effective and available the adaptive methods being used have been (DBE, 2011b, p. 21).

2.7.2.2 The Learner Profile

Every learner in a South African school is supposed to have a Learner Profile document. This document is a separate form from the SIAS toolkit, but forms the basis from which learners who require support are identified. The Learner Profile was introduced into schools with the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and was issued as the *National policy on assessment and qualifications for schools in the general education and training band* (DoE, 2007). In this policy document it is stated that every school must ensure that a Learner Profile is completed for every learner. It is meant to be a continuous record of information that should give a holistic impression of a learner and the learner's progress and performance (DoE, 2007. p. 17). The Learner Profile should be completed as soon as a learner starts Grade R or Grade 1 and then be regularly updated as the learner progresses through the grades. This document replaces all previous continuous record documents that have been used by schools in the past (e.g. record cards, tutor cards, Edlab cards) (DoE, 2007, p. 18).

This Learner Profile has all the relevant information on a child as well as a record of any support, therapy or interventions that the learner may have had. The Learner Profile is, therefore, the initial screening of all learners that will inform the school's ILST of any support needs that the school must address in order to accommodate all learners in an inclusive environment. The Learner Profile should be updated regularly and moves from school to school with the learner throughout his/her school career.

If the screening in the Learner Profile shows that there are clear indications that a learner has additional support needs, the ILST of a school in consultation with the DBST, will then start to use the SIAS toolkit.

2.7.2.3 The SIAS toolkit

The SIAS toolkit is a set of forms bound together in book form and called the *Learner Pack.* This book covers the 4 stages of the SIAS strategy that help to determine the levels of support that a learner needs. The SIAS strategy is "intended to assess the level and extent of

support needed to maximize learners' participation in the learning process" (DoE, 2008a, p. 1). It is also intended to outline the protocol to be followed for the process of assessing learners throughout their school careers, as well as explaining the responsibilities of teachers, managers, DBSTs, ILSTs, parents and care-givers.

The forms in the Learner Pack have to be completed by the ILST in consultation with the educators, the parents, the DBST and any other professionals deemed necessary for that particular case. The four stages of the SIAS strategy are as follows:

- Stage 1: *Screening* of learners done by the school's ILST. During this stage the educator (supported by the ILST) gathers background information on the learner using the Learner Profile. If a learner needs some form of support, the educator begins the process with the parents by having the Diagnostic Profile completed by a health professional, collecting any other relevant reports and completing Section 1 of the Support Needs Assessment (SNA).

- Stage 2: *Identification* of barriers to learning and development. The ILST (together with the DBST's support) then proceed to complete Section 2 of the SNA. This is where the parents together with the school identify the learner's extended support needs by reflecting on the learner's needs and contextual barriers within the home, the school and the community. The school, the educator and the family should reflect on and review all aspects possibly impacting on the learner's ability to access education and draw up an Individual Support Plan.

- Stage 3: *Assessment* of support needs. At this stage the DBST consults with the school's ILST and the parents to determine the level and nature of support needed by a learner. The Sections 3a and 3b of the SNA have to be completed and it is here that a rating key of 1-5 is used to determine the level of support needs.

- Stage 4: *Support* provisioning and monitoring. Section 4 of the SNA is completed by the DBST and summarises what the school is able to provide

and what the support needs are and it determines the most appropriate site at which the learner can be supported. (DoE, 2008a, pp. 10 -12)

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed international as well as national literature relating to Inclusive Education and some of the discourses that have shaped its development and the challenges of implementing it. I focused in particular on developments over the past 12 years in South Africa relating to the implementation of inclusive education policy. Developments around the introduction of the SIAS strategy in the South African context as well as teachers' understanding of this policy were discussed, pointing to possible emerging factors that can impact on policy implementation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is, as discussed under 1.3, to understand how teachers at a primary school implement Inclusive Education and how they are using the SIAS strategy to assess learners' barriers to learning. To inform the research design, I selected a specific South African no-fee-paying primary school in the Eastern Cape to construct a case for attempting to understand and analyse the research goals and related questions.

This chapter lays out the research methodology that has been used in this study. It first discusses qualitative research and the interpretive paradigm within which the research design is located and then shows why the case study method was chosen to investigate Inclusive Education policy implementation. This chapter also describes how the research questions and goals were developed and then incorporated into the research design. This is followed by a description of the data collection methods that were used, which is in turn followed by an explanation of the analysis of the data and statements about the trustworthiness and ethics involved in the research.

3.2 Research Design

The research design for this study arose out of the need to understand the implementation of Inclusive Education at a specific South African no-fee-paying primary school. This study is interested in exploring specific aspects related to the implementation of a new policy that was introduced by the government in 2008 and that is linked to the Inclusive Education Policy in South Africa (see Section 2.5). The *National Strategy on screening, identification, assessment and support* (DoE, 2008a), known as the SIAS strategy, forms part of the proposed 20 year roll-out of *Education White Paper 6* (EWP6) (DoE, 2001). According to this policy, learners are supposed to be referred to full service schools or special needs schools using this strategy if they require higher levels of support for the barriers they are experiencing.

At the special needs school where I have been working for 19 years, it was noted that this process contained certain tensions. Most learners that are referred to the special school are socio-economically challenged and come from schools where no fees are paid. As the SIAS strategy forms an integral part of the overall Inclusive Education policy in South Africa, I felt there was a need to investigate how such a roll-out of policy is received by teachers in schools that lack resources and deal with learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In my literature review, I found that a fair amount of research is conducted in former Model C schools (which are fee-paying schools) or independent schools, but as these schools form only 10 - 15% of the total schools in South Africa (Bloch, 2009, p. 109), it has become critical in my opinion to investigate policy implementation at a school that could be said to be representative of the majority of schools in South Africa.

3.3 Research goals

The aim of this study is to understand how teachers at a primary school understand and implement Inclusive Education, if at all, and to further investigate how they are using the SIAS strategy to assess learners' barriers to learning (refer to Section 1.3). This led me to design my research as a case study based at a single primary school (the case study method is discussed in detail in 3.6). For ease of reference the research goals are repeated here from Section 1.3:

- to describe and analyse how teachers at a particular primary school understand and implement Inclusive Education through the SIAS strategy;
- to describe and analyse teachers' practices in assessing barriers to learning and what, if any, problems and difficulties they may be experiencing; and
- to describe and analyse emergent factors that could impact on policy.

3.4 Research questions

The abovementioned goals for this research helped to formulate the research questions which were discussed in Section 1.3. I found that I had to formulate the questions carefully to be able to determine the research approach that was followed for this study.

3.5 Qualitative research

Policy implementation is a complex issue in education and, in order to research this complexity, it was necessary to adopt a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one. Quantitative research is interested in comparing and measuring results, which do not necessarily give an in-depth understanding of an issue, but rather focus on replicability and empirical evidence (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 12). Qualitative research, on the other hand, is more concerned with "describing and understanding complexity" (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 5) and, for the purposes of this study, this particular approach is better suited to understanding policy implementation.

Electing to use qualitative research was based on a desire to research teachers' understanding of policy at a school functioning under challenging circumstances in the South African educational context. This stance ties in with Tierney & Dilley (2002), who feel there is a "need and demand for investigations to be more relevant to policy issues" (Tierney & Dilley, 2002, p. 466). Similarly, Bassey (1999, p. 39) states that there should be "critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action".

In my 35 years of educational experience, I have found no school to be identical to another, although they may share certain basic systemic characteristics. Quantitative research results that compare data could inform systemic issues, whereas qualitative research is more about describing complex issues, rather than drawing comparisons (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 5). To discover what is happening at specific sites, qualitative research methods offer greater in-depth understanding. Qualitative research that uses an interpretive paradigm is well suited for the "exploration of a particular case" that can help to "elicit what different actors seem to be doing and think is happening" and will help in the analysis and interpretation of the data collected (Bassey, 1999, p. 44). This is why I felt that this research

study about the implementation of Inclusive Education and the *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support* would best be done using the case study method.

3.6 Case study

In designing this research project, it became apparent that the case study method was best suited to investigating the goals for this research. I am asking *how* this policy is being implemented and, in studying a particular school, I am trying to establish how teachers at this research site do this. This, then, led to the question as to *why* teachers are doing assessment the way they do it. This links in with Yin's (2009, p. 13) statement that, if there are 'how' and 'why' questions within the research goals, then a case study method could be the best option, "particularly if the research question is about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher does not have much control" (Yin, 2009, p. 13). This statement is relevant for my research project, because the SIAS strategy was introduced by the National Department of Basic Education and I was observing the levels of implementation, with some participation in the process at a specific site, but unable to control the outcome. Recording my observations and my participatory involvement at the research site enabled me to construct a sufficiently detailed case relative to the research goals and questions.

Choosing the case study method to research Inclusive Education policy implementation was prompted by the need to find a method that allowed for many variables, but was still one that could accommodate a specific research school. Policy implementation is complex and affects all stakeholders in education, but can only really be assessed if looked at within a real and specific context. This ties in with Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011, p. 289), who contend that the strength of a case study lies in the fact that case studies "observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects, and that in-depth understanding is required to do justice to the case". When policy is introduced into schools, there are the *causes* for this (e.g. in this case, the international move towards Inclusive Education and social justice) and the *effects* of this new policy at the actual sites of learning (e.g. increase in the paperwork for teachers, or the new awareness of referral systems).

It can be argued that a case study is too small or limited to have any impact on educational thinking and it is difficult to draw any conclusions from the findings. But, here, I would like to use the term introduced by Bassey (1999, p. 12), namely, *fuzzy generalization,* which he describes as "the kind of statement which makes no absolute claim to knowledge, but hedges its claim with uncertainties." As a researcher I was aware of these uncertainties, but felt that a case study offered the opportunity to study one school in depth and, thereby, capture the "thick description" referred to by Geertz (1973) (as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 290). A further argument is the one by Merriam (1999) (as cited in Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 179), who claims that "much can be learned from a particular case", with reference to Erickson's (1986) argument that "the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations". Arksey & Knight (1999, p. 58) claim that, when doing qualitative research, particularly if it involves a single case study, the researcher may be reluctant to "generalize to a population" but that this "does not mean that no generalization is possible, since the general is always present in the particular". Using this theoretical framework meant that I had to be careful not to generalize if the data did not support such a generalization (Arksey & Knight, p. 59). It could be argued that *fuzzy generalization* has no value to add to the educational debate, but I disagree in so far as most schools are unique in their staff combinations, learner characteristics and infrastructure. Although all schools have common aspects, e.g. the national policies they use, each school, however, remains unique in how it functions. Therefore, each school will present its own experiences in context that can add to the educational debate.

Arksey & Knight (ibid.) also suggest that research should be able to answer the 'so what?' question. A case study requires Geertz' 'thick description' in order to present the reader with enough information to be able to understand the case, which, in turn, allows the reader to come to his/her own conclusions about the study and decide if the 'so what' has been addressed. In my experience, it is important to accept that every reader brings with him/her an 'own' set of experiences that then forms the lens through which any study will be viewed. O'Hanlon (2003, p. 78) says a similar thing about the case study when she states that it can "demonstrate the hermeneutic circle, where description is a means of achieving interpretation through understanding" and where "understanding is constantly moving

from the whole to the part and back to the whole". In my experience, the whole will always be subject to an individual's own world view.

It can also be added that "[a case] study is [a] study of a singularity conducted in depth in natural settings" (Bassey, 1999, p. 47). In my case, the singularity is the particular focus on an assessment strategy within the inclusive education policy. Similarly, Merriam (2002) describes a case study as having a finite quality in terms of time, space and components (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 178). Yin (2009, p. 20) feels that the case study is there to describe an intervention and the "real-life context" in which it occurs as well as enlighten a situation where an intervention being evaluated (in this case the SIAS strategy) has no clear outcomes. He, however, cautions that case studies have been seen to lack rigour, provide little basis for scientific generalization and take too long (Yin, 2009, pp. 14-15). This may sometimes be the case, but in this case study I found that careful recording of observations provided thick description that helped with the understanding of the interviews and this, in turn, assisted me to build a solid case study.

Stake (2001) states that the case study is important for "adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding" (Stake, 2001, in Denzon & Lincoln,2003, p. 136). He further argues that, "because of the universality and importance of experiential understanding, and because of their compatibility with such understanding, case studies can be expected to continue to have an epistemological advantage over other inquiry methods as a basis for naturalistic generalization" (ibid.). Using participant observation in this case study to construct the case was helpful in establishing the narrative of the teachers' experiences which, in turn, lead to a better understanding of, in this case, policy implementation.

To build a strong case study, it is also necessary to select an appropriate site for the study as well as make relevant decisions regarding the sampling of the participants.

3.7 Research Site

Initially, I had thought this case study should be of more than one school, but, as the dimensions of the research goals became clearer, I decided to focus on one school. Through my work at the special needs school, I interact with many primary schools in the district,

which gave me the opportunity to make an informed decision about the site for my research.

3.7.1 Site selection

I considered it important to conduct my research at a school that was known to be trying to implement EWP6 and SIAS. The school needed to have attended all the training sessions on the SIAS strategy during the first half of 2009 (also see Section 4.3). When the Occupational Therapist from the special school invited me to assist her at the Welcome Primary School, I was introduced to the Institution Level Support Team (ILST) coordinator of the school and, a little later, to the principal.

I felt it was important to research a school that could be said to be fairly typical of the primary schools within the educational district. The school that was selected is situated in the oldest township of the town, which is a very socio-economically deprived area. There is significant unemployment, low educational qualifications with over 20% of residents not having gone beyond Grade 6 and a lack of primary services such as electricity, toilets and running water (M.. RCE Occasional Paper No 2, May 2008). The learners often come from homes where there is no breadwinner, or they live with grandparents.

For the purposes of this case study research and to ensure the anonymity of the school, I will refer to the school at which the research was conducted as Welcome Primary School. The school's learner numbers have averaged around 590 between 2009 and 2012. There are 18 teachers, including the principal, as well as 3 support staff members. The school has 18 classes, with between 32 and 40 learners per class, from Grade R to Grade 6. Staffing challenges in 2012 meant that one Grade 2 class was split into the remaining two classes creating two classes of 51 and 53 learners respectively.

3.7.2 Access

Denzin & Lincoln (2003, p. 54) advise that a researcher must remember that access and entry to research sites are "sensitive components of qualitative research". They stress the importance of establishing trust, rapport and authentic communication patterns. With this in mind, I carefully selected the school for my research from 14 other primary schools with

which I had contact in the educational district. Access to a school is a sensitive issue in the South African educational context. Principals are wary of outsiders (my personal experience) and are reluctant for their schools to be scrutinised. In my case, it was even more difficult in that I was not an isiXhosa person and I had to take cognizance of these attitudes. The gatekeepers to my research would be the principal and the ILST coordinator at the school.

Gaining access to the school where I conducted my research was a gradual process. My first encounter (as mentioned under Section 3.6.2) was when the Occupational Therapist from the special needs school asked me to assist with the assessment of a learner. From this intervention, I was asked to assist more often and, thereby, became acquainted with the ILST coordinator and then the principal. To obtain formalized permission to gain access to a site is very important and it is explained by Cohen et al, (2011, p. 81), to be the "best opportunity for researchers to present their credentials as serious investigators and establish their own ethical position with respect to their proposed research". I went about formally approaching the principal and the ILST coordinator for permission to conduct research at their school, firstly, by having a meeting with each one to discuss my research project and to offer my help with assessing learners that were experiencing barriers to learning at the school. Then, secondly, I followed this up with a formal letter to the principal. This process took a few weeks and I was then informed verbally by the ILST coordinator that the staff had agreed to allow me to do my research at the school after a full staff meeting.

Once the site had been selected and access was gained, I had to begin the process of deciding which staff members would participate in the study.

3.8 Selection of research participants

The implementation of a new government policy within a school involves the school management as well as the teachers in their classrooms. Deciding who to interview was partly driven by the need to have representatives from the different levels of the school's teaching staff, namely, the principal, the deputy principal, the heads of department and the class teachers. In addition, it was important to include the coordinator of the ILST (Institution Level Support Team) as well as teachers who were part of the team. The question did arise whether the selection was the best possible one. The possibility of bias

towards selecting teachers that I knew better than others did exist but, in the end, the circumstances of the research dictated who would be interviewed.

Using purposive sampling I ensured that the teachers in management positions at the school were interviewed despite numerous challenges as I felt this was essential to the data collection. Purposive sampling is when the interviewer explicitly selects participants who are "likely to generate appropriate and useful data" (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 118). However, with the post level 1 teachers, I adopted a "convenience sampling" method, choosing whoever was free to be interviewed by me (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 102). Some possible participants were never free during the time available, while others made excuses on the day of the interview (e.g. illness, pay day or family responsibility). My own constraints regarding time available played a role in this sampling process.

The selection was, therefore, determined mostly by the availability of the teachers, but I wanted an even spread between Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teachers as each phase encounters different challenges when identifying learners with support needs. At Foundation Phase level, teachers are concerned with teaching the basics of reading and writing in the learners' home language, while, at the Intermediate Phase level, teachers are teaching in English and not in the learners' home language. This often creates additional barriers to learning. I therefore interviewed the principal, the deputy principal, both Heads of Department, and seven teachers at Post Level 1 – making a total of 11 interviews.

Other participants in this study, such as the coordinator of the Molteno reading project, the principal of the special needs school, the occupational therapist, members of the DBST and various teachers outside Welcome Primary School, were not interviewed using digital recording, but I recorded the important aspects of my informal discussions with them in my field notes. These conversations added to the rich description of the study and gave further insights into the questions of this research project. I found that, during the time of this research, my observation skills were definitely heightened as I was constantly questioning whether the person I was interacting with was or was not a participant, and if their comments had any relevance to the study.

By the end of the study I had interviewed 6 Foundation Phase teachers and 5 Intermediate Phase teachers. As all educational research is sensitive, the researcher must at all times remain sensitive to the context, the cultures and the possible consequences of the research on the participants (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 165). To maintain the anonymity of the teacher participants, I will not indicate the teachers' positions within the school. All the teachers are female and isiXhosa speaking. The following table indicates the codes used for the participants and the teachers' years of teaching experience and the phase that they were teaching in at the time of the research (although most of them had taught in both phases at some stage of their careers):

Table 3.1: Teacher participant information

TEACHER CODE NO.	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE
FOUNDATION PHASE	
FP1	17
FP2	33
FP3	29
FP4	16
FP5	34
FP6	15
INTERMEDIATE PHASE	
IP1	39
IP2	18
IP3	6
IP4	26
IP5	26

There are some considerations about the participants that do need to be brought to the reader's attention. For instance the heterogeneous nature of the participants must be noted from the beginning as this could raise questions about the validity of the findings. The ILST coordinator is a Foundation Phase educator and the deputy principal and principal are both Intermediate Phase educators. There is one HOD (Head of Department) in each of the phases.

If I had interviewed more teachers from the Intermediate Phase, would my data have been significantly different? These teachers all use English as the LOLT (Language of Learning and Teaching) and interact on a different level with the learners. Very often, the learners in need of high levels of support are very clearly identified by the time they reach the Intermediate Phase as these learners cannot read and write at the expected level of competency. The teachers are confronted with the challenge of providing appropriate support for these learners. At the Foundation Phase level, teachers are involved in the identification and differentiation of those learners who have high levels of support needs and those who are just developmentally delayed and likely to catch up to their peers with moderate levels of support. It could be argued that at the Foundation Phase level of assessment of barriers to learning, there still exists the possibility of the barrier to learning being overcome as the learner develops both physically and cognitively, while at the Intermediate Phase level this likelihood of change is significantly diminished (my personal experience).

Because I was more regularly involved with the Grade 2 teachers while assessing their learners, questions did arise about their inclusion in the sampling. This concern was partly justified by the responses of two of the respondents, who seemed to be very concerned about 'doing it right' for me. Our closer interaction on other levels made them want to 'help' me with my research. This ties in with Miltiades' (2008, p. 278, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 422) view that respondents may give what they think is socially desirable as an answer. It took longer to relax with these participants and this may have influenced the responses that they made. The third Grade 2 teacher was interviewed before I had assessed the learners in her class and this meant the atmosphere of the interview was slightly different to the other two in the same grade. This has had the effect of making me even more alert for interviewer bias when analysing the data.

3.9 The research process

This research study was planned to gather data over three phases. It was envisaged that it would provide rich descriptions for data collected within a qualitative, interpretive paradigm. The initial phase involved gathering information about the inclusive education policies and their implementation in an educational district and, then, refining the focus to

consider implementation in one, particular school. This was followed by a more intense phase of participant observations and interviews. The final phase involved withdrawing from the site to analyse the data and then to write the thesis.

3.9.1 Planning Stage

Taking into consideration which elements make up a qualitative research design, I followed the planning stages as put forward by Cohen et al (2011, p. 223):

Stage 1: Locating the field of study within Inclusive Education; then focusing on the implementation of the SIAS strategy and deciding to conduct a case study at a single primary school.
Stage 2: Identifying the school to be the research site.
Stage 3: Finding my role through interaction with the teachers at the school and managing my entry into the school.
Stage 4: Formulating the research questions around Inclusive Education and the SIAS strategy.
Stage 5: Addressing ethical issues within the case study setting.
Stage 6: Deciding the sampling for the interviews.
Stage 7: Developing and maintaining my relations within the school.
Stage 8: Data collection outside the school setting.
Stage 9: Data collection within the school.
Stage 10: Data analysis
Stage 11: Leaving the field
Stage 12: Writing the thesis

Figure 3.1: Planning stages

3.9.2 Phases of the research

As the goals and questions for this research were developed, it became apparent that the study would be complex and layered. The complexity of the case led to the research design decision to present the case study in three phases, using the stages (from 3.9.1) as a guide:

PHASE	TIMEFRAME	ACTIVITIES AND DATA	MY ROLE
Phase 1 Stages 1-3	Dec 2008 – Jan 2011	Introduction to the SIAS strategy. SIAS Training workshops. Establishment of DBSTs. Documents: Minutes of Meetings; Departmental circulars. Workshop with ILST at research site. Gaining access to the research site. Observations.	Facilitator for the SIAS strategy. Member of the district DBST team. Assisting OT at research site. Interacting with ILST at research site. Peripheral participant Role
Phase 2 Stages 4-9	Feb 2011 – Nov 2011	Weekly observations with field notes. Weekly assessment of Grade 2 learners. Interviews with 11 teachers.	Assessing learners in Grade 2 classes. Weekly discussions with teachers and/or school management. Interviewer Observer-as-participant
Phase 3 Stages 10-12	Dec 2011 – Nov 2012	Further documents: minutes of meetings and circulars from the Department of Basic Education. Observations.	Withdrawal from research site. Interacting with DBST. Occasional interaction with the ILST coordinator and principal. Attending meetings. Peripheral participant role

Figure 3.2: Phases of the research

The phases can be explained in more detail as follows:

Phase 1: The first phase is about establishing the context of: (i) the inclusive education policy and the roll-out of the SIAS strategy, (ii) the education district in which the school

functions and (iii) the school itself. This phase covers the period from December 2008 – January 2011. During this phase I gathered data from departmental circulars, minutes of meetings and observations that I made during this period.

Phase 2: The second phase is a close study of teachers' understanding of Inclusive

Education and their assessment of barriers to learning at a single school. This section includes the examining of teachers' understanding of Inclusive Education and the teachers' assessment practices, their understanding and use of the SIAS assessment tools, and how individual teachers interpret and make meaning of assessments about learners made by the school Institution Level Support Team (ILST) and professionals. It also looked at the challenges and difficulties they encountered when doing so. These data were gathered through interviews and observations recorded as field notes. During this phase, the interviews were transcribed and ongoing analysis took place. This period of the study is from February 2011 – November 2011.

Phase 3: The third phase is the time of withdrawal from the research site and of writing the thesis. During this time the data were analysed in depth. As the implementation of this policy is an ongoing matter, it became necessary to include further departmental circulars, minutes of meetings and observations. These data have helped in gaining additional insight into the research and have given me greater perspective on the relevance of the study.

3.10 Data Collection

An educational case study is an empirical study bounded in space and time using data collection which provides an audit trail that allows other researchers to validate or challenge findings (Bassey, 1999, p. 58; Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 178; Gerring, 2007, p. 19). Studying Inclusive Education and the implementation of the SIAS strategy within a single school context, showed me that there were various levels to my research and that the data I wanted/needed to collect, would have to come from various methods. As Seidman (1998, p. 5) contends: "…research interests have many levels, and as a result multiple methods may be appropriate". I chose to conduct interviews with teachers at the school as well as observe the functioning of the school by interacting with the staff and learners at the school. In addition, I perused various documents such as minutes of meetings as well as

Department of Basic Education circulars and notices sent out by the Inclusive Directorate of Education in the Eastern Cape as well as the local district office of education.

There is a dilemma in that it is difficult to decide when there is enough data and, particularly in a case study, this can be a challenge where time frames have to be determined, and cut-offs as to the number of interviews conducted or documents sourced, have to be made. Bassey (1999, p. 60) refers to the two-edged sword of sufficient data, meaning "not too little, not too much". Data must, therefore, remain relevant, be systematically stored and allow for meaningful analysis. My primary source of data is from the interviews I conducted with the 11 teachers. As mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, I have also collected data through observations and by means of document analysis. The following sections now turn towards a more detailed discussion of each data collection method.

3.10.1 Interviews

The interview has become an integral part of modern society, especially in our media. Every day we read or hear about what somebody said, or saw or heard. However, for research purposes, the interview is "usually a specifically planned event rather than a naturally occurring situation", which is different to an ordinary conversation and this means that the researcher must set up and abide by the 'rules of the game' in an interview situation (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409). The interview is a useful tool for data collection in that it is flexible and allows for variation in questioning as well as in the answers, but at the same time the researcher must remain alert to the many challenges inherent in interviewing, including interviewer bias, issues of anonymity (ibid.) and, in this study, the issue of language constraints.

Tierney & Dilley (2002, p. 466) state that interviewing, in qualitative research, could take on "a primary role in making educational policy relevant and responsible to constituents". Seidman sums up the value of interviewing as follows:

> "It is a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives constitute education. As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the

> importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration. Finally, it is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others' stories" (Seidman, 1998, p. 7-8).

Similarly Arksey & Knight (1999, p. 15) argue that interviews are one method by which the human world may be explored, although one must remember it is the world of beliefs and meanings, not of actions, "[s]ince what people claim to think, feel or do does not necessarily align well with their actions". In other words, interviews only give the researcher insight into what people say and not necessarily into what they do (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 120).

The research interview has many and varied purposes but the main one is, essentially, that it is a transaction between someone seeking information and another supplying information (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 411). It then becomes important to make the research design decision as to which type of interview is suitable for the study. The more structured an interview is, the more likely it will be for gathering quantitative data. If the data required is about how individuals view the world or, in this case, their teaching experience, then the interview will be less structured and the data will be qualitative. The selection of the interview type, therefore, depends on 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 412).

I chose the semi-structured interview as this gave me the opportunity to "set the agenda" while allowing the interviewees' responses to determine the kinds of information that I received (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 94). The semi-structured interview is an interview that is, therefore, more loosely structured around an interview guide than a structured interview. The researcher can "follow up ideas, probe responses and ask for clarification or further elaboration" in a semi-structured interview (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 7). My interviews were conducted to find out what teachers did at a certain school and what they knew and understood about policy and how, if at all, they were implementing this policy. Only by interviewing teachers as individuals in a semi-structured interview situation, could I gain these data as this was an interview type that allowed for the teachers to express themselves freely. My field notes gave me insights, but the interviews let me access information that would, otherwise, not have become available to me.

From my literature review, I became very aware that interviewing as a method for data collection is a time-consuming activity and, in addition, the researcher must at all times be aware of the potential loss of information once an interview is transcribed. However, it seems to me to be the best method for gaining information about people directly involved with attempting to implement government policy. Interviewing, in the context I was working in, also had certain challenges that had to be taken into account. Some teachers found it difficult to express individual opinions, being used to speaking within a group, or preferring to make general statements. This ties in with the "we-self" rather than the "I-self" of some cultures, as described by Miltiades (Miltiades, 2008, p 282, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 421). Gubrium & Holstein refer to the "contemporary Western image of the individualized self" and that it is important to be aware that there are different images in cultures that do not follow the Western opinion (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 5). This meant that I had to be aware that some expressed opinions may have been what were perceived to be the correct responses within a collective, particularly within the Xhosa culture. This situation was apparent at the start of the research process and underlined the necessity of my becoming involved within the school to be accepted as a colleague. This understanding on my part also showed the value of doing my own transcriptions of the interviews as I could recall the nuances of the second language usage during the interviews (refer to 3.8.1.5).

3.10.1.1 Interview schedule (included as Appendix A)

The interview schedule was drawn up according to my research goals. The questions were designed to form a guide for the semi-structured interviews. These questions helped to get answers to specific research questions, while allowing for a semi-structured interview situation that let participants express their views freely and enabled me to follow up on some of the responses. The interview schedule helped to keep the interviews "on track" and as relevant as possible for the research purpose.

The questions were based on the Inclusive Education documents, as well as on insights gained from the literature reviewed for this study. The literature helped to give me a broader perspective on Inclusive Education trends worldwide and assisted me to be open to the teachers' responses. My own experiences in the special needs schooling sector and

interaction with the Inclusive Directorate of Education in the Eastern Cape Province over the past 19 years also influenced how I drew up the interview schedule.

The interview schedule was tested in one pilot interview with an isiXhosa-speaking teacher from a different school. This helped me to refine the questions and to be prepared for unexpected responses. The pilot interview also alerted me to possible language issues that I could encounter during my interviews.

3.10.1.2 Informed consent

Arksey & Knight (1999, p. 129) speak of informed consent and its purpose "to safeguard participants' privacy and welfare, and to give them a choice about whether or not to take part in a study". Each respondent was briefed about my research and given a background information sheet. To ensure each one understood what they were going to do during the interviews, I explained the process and gave them the option of withdrawing at any stage. Every participant signed the consent form, fully aware of the content.

It could be argued that my role at the school put me in a position of power and the teachers may have been vulnerable in that they agreed to participate to please me. This made me aware that I had to approach informed consent as an ethical issue as it is concerned with the rights of an individual to freedom and self-determination and also to his/her rights to assess the risks that could be involved in the research (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 77). It was, therefore, my duty to clearly inform the participants of their rights, the format the research would take, their right to ask questions and, above all, their right to withdraw from the research project at any time. (Also refer to ethics under Section 3.13). Before each interview began, I spent time with each interviewee explaining my research, the value I thought it had and how I hoped it would be of value to educational research. I repeated the content of the consent form in isiXhosa as well as in English, making sure they understood their rights. This was verified when one interviewee did opt to use her right not to answer a question (FP2).

3.10.1.3 Recording and transcription of the interviews

The interviews were conducted away from the school at my house, during the early afternoon hours. This was necessary as the teachers' classrooms were very noisy and there was always the risk of being interrupted. The exception was the interview with the principal, which was conducted in her office. I used a digital voice recorder that allowed me to transfer the interview files to my computer. Only one interview was conducted with two teachers simultaneously. These teachers were not from the same phase and this made me decide to separate the responses into two interviews for ease of analysis.

I elected to transcribe the interviews myself to minimize breaches of confidentiality and to gain a deeper understanding of my data. The process of transcription began within a month of completing the interviews. This helped to retain a reasonable amount of the "unspoken" information that I gained during the interviews. It was an intense and time-consuming activity (about 100 hours), but gave me insights that I would have missed had I not done so myself. The transcriptions were filed as File A.

3.10.2 Observation using field notes (see Appendix B)

Observation plays an important role in a case study and can become one of the sources of evidence to answer the research questions. The format that this observation takes depends on the case study itself, but usually is in the form of participant observation (Gilham, 2000, p.21; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 457). These observations are helpful in obtaining additional, or even alternative, viewpoints to those acquired in the interviews, as it is a known fact that there is a difference between what people say and what they do (Gillham, 2000, p. 13; Atkinson & Coffey, 2002, p. 809; Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 120). The field notes help to contribute to the "chain of evidence" that a case study is based on, as described by Yin (2009, p. 122). The fact that these field notes are dated and chronologically filed, makes them an important part of the case study's structure and can help to determine the sequence of events that inform the findings.

My role within the school was that of "observer-as-participant" (Gold, 1958 as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 457). My observation was unstructured in that I wanted to gain a rich description of the situation to help me possibly generate hypotheses (Cohen et al., 2011, p.

458). As explained in 3.6.3, I gained access to the school partly because of my ability to assist the teachers with assessments of learners who were experiencing barriers to learning. I was able to visit the school on a weekly basis and, by assisting the school with learner assessments, I gained "insider" status (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 8) and was able to observe the functioning of the school. Every week, I wrote up my observations as field notes as soon as possible after my visit, to capture the observations. These included conversations, direct observations and comments on interventions at the school.

The storage of these field notes was done on the computer as well as filed as hard copy for reference purposes. This file was labelled File B. These field notes have given me a greater insight into the data produced by the interviews and have helped me to understand how the policy under discussion fits into the context of the school. Lotz-Sisitka & Janse van Rensburg also speak of this when they contend that the "ongoing consideration of context" helps the researcher to at all times be reflexive and rigorous in the analysis and understanding of the developments within the context of, in this case, the implementation of new policy (Lotz-Sisitka & Janse van Rensburg, 2006, p. 5). In addition the observations made in the field notes provided a space for me to make some interim comments on the research, especially as this case study was constantly affected by the contextual factors that make up the often changing school environment.

3.10.3 My role in the research: participant observation

The researcher's role within the research study is critical to the type of data he/she will be able to collect. Over the four year period of this research, I became aware of my shifting roles that I took on during the research process (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 42; Wilmot, 2005, p. 152). My role as participant observer changed from a peripheral observer to observer-as-participant and back to peripheral observer (refer to Figure 3.2). According to Merriam, the researcher "has to balance participation in order to absorb the situation, with sufficient detachment to be able to analyse and observe it in a detached way" (Merriam, 1998, p. 103, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 465). Initially, my role was peripheral – during Phase 1 – interacting occasionally with the school for specific reasons. During Phase 2, my role became more active with my weekly visits to the school and my assessment of the Grade 2 learners. This was essential to gain insight into the relationships between staff members and

to observe the functioning of the school. This role corresponds to the "observer-as-participant" as described by Cohen et al (20ll, p. 465) where the contact between the researcher and the teachers is less extensive (only once a week) and where the teachers are aware that they are being observed.

Adler&Adler (1987, p. 39) refer to the researcher's need to be sensitive to the norms of reciprocity and exchange as they work in the field. By offering to assess the Grade 2 learners, I found that the teachers were able to relate to me with greater ease as they became accustomed to my presence in the school. This became apparent when there was an increase in requests by various teachers in other grades to assist them with their learners who were experiencing barriers to learning.

Participant observation requires that the researcher spends a substantial period of time with the participants in order to lessen the reactivity effects on the researched (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 465). I interacted with the school for 5 months before beginning the interviews and continued throughout the interviewing process as well as after the interviews had been completed. The weekly participant observations helped me to become immersed in the contextual dynamics of the school and, thereby, generated 'thick description' that helped me with the interpretation of the data in the interviews by not only relying on my own inferences (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 466).

3.10.4 Documents

A number of documents relating to Inclusive Education have been used for this study. The policy documents reviewed in Chapter 2 are from the National Department of Basic Education. This study looked at how a school is trying to implement these policies which required an in depth study of particularly EWP6 and the SIAS strategy (refer to Sections 2.7 and 2.8). In addition this study required the perusal of documents generated by the provincial and district offices. These include a number of minutes, circulars and notices from the Eastern Cape Directorate of Inclusive Education as well as the local district office. These documents have formed part of the triangulated approach used for the data analysis of this case study: interviews, observations and documents. The types of documents that were perused in detail were:

1. Minutes of various departmental meetings that the researcher attended.

2. Circulars from the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education generated at the local district office or at the provincial head office.

Arksey & Knight (1999, p. 17) claim that:

> "Documents are created for a purpose and may mislead the enquirer who has different questions in mind. For example, the minutes of meetings say what was discussed and what was decided. However, they say little about the context of the meetings, nor do they indicate who took what stance and why certain stances prevailed over others".

But they also mention that when documents are used together with other research methods, they can be very useful as sources of background knowledge and for cross-checking data (ibid.).

The interim notifications and circulars from the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education as well as other documents that had a bearing on the research gave invaluable insight into the progress that was being made by a province with regard to the implementation of *Education White Paper 6*. Other documents that have informed the research extensively are the minutes of the District Based Support Team (DBST) meetings that were held at certain times throughout the 4 year study period. These DBST meeting minutes have provided interesting information, which has assisted me in observing the progress being made with the implementation of the SIAS strategy. Records of meetings called by the Inclusive Education sector of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, as well as national Special Needs Schools Association meetings, have also informed this study.

I chose to file these documents in between the weekly observation field notes (File B), according to the dates, thereby creating a "journal" type file of the chronological data gathered. In this section of the data, it has helped with the analysis of the data and increased the understanding of the data and helped to provide answers to the research questions (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 554).

3.11 Data analysis

This study is about qualitative data analysis. The analyses and presentation of the data largely depends on the issue of "*fitness for purpose"*, which Cohen et al. (2011) describe as "what [the researcher] wants the data analysis to do" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 538). In this case study research I wanted to describe and interpret the data.

3.11.1 Organisation of the data

The data were organised according to the type of information that was generated. This meant that I created two separate files that were compiled as follow:

- File A: The interviews were transcribed and then filed according to Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers. Each teacher was assigned a code number (e.g. FP3 or IP4) and the transcripts were filed according to this numbering system. The explanation for the code numbers is as follows: FP1 means Foundation Phase teacher number 1; FP2 means Foundation Phase teacher number 2; IP1 means Intermediate Phase teacher number 1 and so on. This numbering system was used in the entire data analysis process and, if the same teachers were part of the weekly observations, then I referred to them by their assigned codes.

- File B: The weekly observations were recorded on computer and then printed as hard copies and filed chronologically. The departmental circulars, minutes of meetings and additional records of conversations were filed in between the weekly observations according to the dates on them (also refer to 3.10.4). This helped to create a journal type data file providing detailed and rich data (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 539) and helped to keep a perspective on the events relating to the research for the whole four year period.

This method of organizing the analysis of the data brings together the "various data streams", in this case the interviews, observations and documents, to be collated to provide the answers to the research questions (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 552). This initial organisation of the data was then followed by a process whereby the data was reduced by content

analysis that placed the data in categories or themes according to the research questions (Cohen et., 2011, p. 559). Once the broad themes had been established, I proceeded with more detailed coding.

3.11.2 Coding

Coding was done according to the themes that the research questions and then the interview schedule presented. Each theme was assigned a colour flag and then the data was analysed and 'flagged' accordingly. After this process, I copied and pasted these passages relating to the major themes into a folder (on computer). These were printed out and analysed again, but this time to note patterns, frequencies and trends under a specific theme and also how these related to the literature and documents. I was mindful of the problems related to the use of computers in this process. "Computers do not do away with 'the human touch', as humans are still needed to decide and generate the codes and categories, to verify and interpret the data" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 544).

After the initial coding process, a number of emergent themes and, sometimes, unexpected points of interest presented themselves and required further coding and analysis. These themes are dealt with in Chapter 6 and have added a further layer to this research.

Using tabulation to analyse data, in some instances, was very helpful for determining trends. Only once certain information was tabulated, did it emerge that some concerns or issues were, for example, more predominant in the lower grades than in the higher grades. However, by using this tabulation method, I was aware of losing some of the unique responses of the teachers. Cohen et al., (2011) also mention that "summarizing and presenting data in tabular form can address the twin issues of qualitative research: data reduction through careful data display and commentary" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 551). This emphasises the need for the researcher to comment on each table to help to clarify the findings.

3.12 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a term that has come to replace the "conventional views of reliability and validity" and it is concerned with issues of "credibility, confirmability, transferability and

dependability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 210). When can one trust a research project? What makes my research trustworthy in the eyes of the reader?

3.12.1. Validity

Validity is a matter of degree in qualitative data, but has certain principles that must be considered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 180). Internal validity is when the researcher attempts to show that her description or explanation of the data can, indeed, be supported by the data that she presents in her study (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 183). External validity is about whether the results "can be generalized to the wider population, cases, settings, times or situations, i.e. the transferability of the findings" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 186).

To make such transferability possible, it is very important to have thick description. For this study, this was provided in the interviews and the observational field notes. In addition to external validity, participant observation also has to be aware of possible researcher bias and be rigorous in checking whether the observer's presence "might bring about different behaviours" or "the researcher might 'go native', becoming too attached to the group to see it sufficiently dispassionately" (Cohen et al., 2011, p 210).

To research policy implementation in a school, it was necessary to look at ecological validity for recording how policies are actually happening 'at the chalk face'. It is concerned with examining and addressing the specific characteristics of a particular situation, for example, how policies are actually impacting in practice (in this case at the Welcome Primary School), rather than simply having data that reproduce "the 'rhetoric of policies', i.e. that assume that policies are implemented in the ways intended or in the ways that the powerful groups intended" (Brock-Utne, 1996, p. 618, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 195). Therefore, it could be said that ecological validity is another form of external validity, concerned with "the extent to which characteristics of one situation or behaviour observed in one setting can be transferred or generalized to another situation." (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 195).

Even when it comes to reporting the data, the researcher must be aware of threats to the validity of the study. For instance, being too selective in the use of data, misrepresenting the

data message, or not answering the research questions (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 199) can be examples of threats to data validity.

For the data analysis to be authentic in my study, it was necessary at all times to consider those factors that could have influenced the gathering of certain data. Were respondents making certain statements to me in order to please me or was it a genuine statement? Was the fact that a respondent was nervous affecting the content of what was being said? As a researcher, I was constantly aware of these possible influences, in particular when one respondent thanked me for my assistance, when I could not see how a brief classroom interaction and an assessment of a learner could possibly make a difference in a learner's scholastic ability.

I needed to take into consideration that there may have been a certain reserve around the possibility of my not honouring the anonymity or confidentiality aspects of my research brief. The need to at all times be aware of the responsibility placed on me as I held all the different pieces of the puzzle and not to lose any was constantly with me. Is data still relevant if shared under these circumstances? It was necessary to leave out any data that was in any way obscured by validity issues.

With some interviewees, there was a sense of the "inner voice" being opposed by, and sometimes replaced by, an outer, more public voice as referred to by Seidman (1998, p. 63). This happened if the interviewee spoke as if 'someone' else was listening to the interview (IP1) and reading out lists of facts (FP3). Green and Thorogood (2009, p. 107) point out that social differences must be acknowledged and included when analysing data. The South African reality of having different cultural backgrounds (i.e. of my being a white educator conducting interviews with isiXhosa-speaking interviewees) was always a factor to consider in the gathering of the data as there could still be a tendency to want to please me by some interviewees, because they perceived me to be an older person and someone they wanted to please in return for my helping them with learner assessments.

Seidman (1998, p. 16) reminded me that, at all times, the interviewer must remain aware of the fact that no matter how carefully I tried to minimize my influence on the participants' contribution to the interview, "interviewers are a part of the interviewing picture". My

questions, interpretations and understanding of responses have become part of the data. Similarly, Walford (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 410) contends "interviewers and interviewees co-construct the interview". I had my interview schedule as my construct, while the interviewees each brought their own reality that they shared with me.

The need to verify information by cross-referencing to the field notes, documents and interviews was always paramount during the research process. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 431) make this very point when they state: "there is no single canon of validity; rather the notion of fitness for purpose within an ethically defensible framework should be adopted". The researcher needs to, at all times, be aware of these issues.

Similarly, Yin (2009, p. 189) urges the "investigator" to present evidence with data that support and challenge the issue under discussion, from which a reader should be able to draw his/her own conclusions from the evidence that is presented.

3.12.2 Reliability

Reliability can be seen as another word for "dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 199). Conducting all the interviews (except the interview with the principal) under identical conditions helped to enhance the possibility for reliability.

Problems around bias in interviews must also be taken into account by the researcher, especially when conducting semi-structured interviews. This allows for "open-ended questions [that] enable important but unanticipated issues to be raised" (Cohen, 2011, p. 205), which is different to a structured interview situation. Digital recording does help to minimize researcher bias in recording the interviewees' responses – no one is placing the conversation on hold while a point is recorded by the, possibly, biased researcher.

3.12.3 Triangulation

Triangulation is often used in research as a means for establishing the validity of data and interpretations. Stake (1995, p. 114) refers to methodological triangulation, where the researcher, particularly in a case study, uses observation, interview and document review to validate findings.

"Triangulation between methods involves the use of more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective", but triangulation, especially data triangulation, is criticized by a number of authors (such as Lincoln & Guba (1985), Patton (1980) and Fielding & Fielding (1986), all cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 197), who feel triangulation does not necessarily increase validity. However, other authors feel that, in spite of these criticisms, a triangulated study still has potential merits, especially if triangulation is conceived less as a strategy for confirmation and more as one for in-depth understanding and completeness" (Arksey & Knight,1999, p. 24). In the case of my study, I found that being able to confirm findings across my methods of data collection helped me to feel confident in reporting the finding (as found in Section 5.6). The converse was also true, in that, when I could not validate a finding, I had to exercise caution in stating what a particular finding was or even leave it out.

3.13 Ethics

Ethical issues play a vital role in research and must be addressed by the researcher from the very beginning of the study. There are many dilemmas that a researcher faces when conducting ethical research. Amongst these are protecting a participant's identity; obtaining a participant's consent fairly (as discussed under Section 3.10.1.2); gaining access to the site (refer to Section 3.7.2); respecting individuals' decisions to participate or withdraw; handling the data with sensitivity and being aware of cultural or language issues. There is, therefore, a constant tension in research between providing rich descriptions of situations, people or institutions and the possibility that this will allow these to be identified and their anonymity to be breached (Brock-Utne, 1996, p. 618, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 195).

3.13.1 Anonymity and confidentiality

As qualitative data analysis is often concerned with individual cases and unique instances, "it raises the question of identifiability, confidentiality and privacy of individuals" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 542). In addition, all participants must feel secure and know that they are protected, which can be linked to "the principle of *primum non nocere* – do no harm to participants" (ibid.). Knowing how sensitive the structures and relationships can be between staff members at a school and, in addition, being aware of the strong Xhosa cultural trait of almost absolute respect for age and position, I chose to transcribe the interviews myself to avoid any possible chance of the information being disclosed to the

respondents inappropriately (also refer to Section 3.1.5). All references to names of schools and the town in which the research was conducted, have been carefully removed to protect the identity of the participants. Seidman (1998, p. 58) reminded me that I had to keep in mind whether my participants "would be made vulnerable if identified, and whether the disguise can be effected in a way that does not distort the data." Arksey & Knight (1999) also discuss confidentiality and state that "[assurances] that personal information will be kept confidential can influence whether or not someone will actually take part in a study. A [further] 'bonus' is that responses to questions may well be more frank" (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 132).

A dilemma that I faced was the need to "hide" the identity of the teachers sufficiently. I realised that, although I had used codes to name participants, it would have been easy for staff members to work out which code pertained to which teacher. Guba & Lincoln (1989) state that qualitative research methodology means that a lot of personal interactions have to take place, and this could lead to "sticky problems of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as other interpersonal difficulties" (as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2004, p. 33). Considering some of the confidential information shared with me I, therefore, felt it appropriate to uphold the principle of anonymity. As Seidman (1998, p. 50) notes: "…the potential vulnerability of the participant cannot be calculated ahead of time". Only once the data was collected and analysed, did it become apparent that there was a potential problem with the one participant as she had shared some potentially critical information that presented members of the School Management Team (SMT) in an unfavourable light. This influenced how I dealt with the issue of dissemination.

3.13.2 Dissemination

Once the transcription process was complete and it became apparent that the information was potentially harmful to some of the interviewees if their identity became known, I made the decision to rather share summaries of findings with the school rather than all the detailed information. Huberman (1995, as cited in Cousins & Earl, 1995, p. 106) states that "the very process of feeding back data is a delicate business". Sharing general conclusions with the school rather than detailed information involving the participants proved to be a satisfactory process. The same criteria applied for the district office and the Eastern Cape

Department of Basic Education as some of the evidence was quite specifically linked to certain individuals in these sections.

3.13.3 Language dilemmas

Language forms an important aspect of validity issues and ethical dilemmas. Any research done in cross-cultural settings will need to be aware of challenges that could arise regarding language usage. If participants' home language is different to that of the researcher, care must be taken to ensure that misunderstandings of language do not occur, especially where different meaning is attached to certain words, particularly where cultural values are applied differently by the participants. This means that there must at all times be "open and reflexive debate about how utterances are interpreted" (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 99, citing Temple, 1997).

During my interviews, I had to verify my understanding of words, especially those that were pronounced differently to the standard English pronunciation that I refer to, and could lead to misunderstandings. An example is the way one participant (FP3, p. 20) pronounced "deviations" to sound like "divisions". This made me very conscious of the fact that a researcher has to be very alert during interviews to gather valid data that is not compromised by language misunderstandings. Sometimes small differences in language nuances can affect the meaning of what was said, if transcribed without a reflexive attitude towards the content. I have a working knowledge of isiXhosa and speak it on a daily basis. However, I conceded that I may not always understand fully what is being said. To overcome this problem I used my isiXhosa speaking colleagues to discuss words that I found were used in unusual contexts to clarify statements made by the participants. These conversations led to additional insight into the data that helped with the transcription process. To verify language issues in my interview transcriptions, I used an isiXhosa speaking friend who did not know the school or the staff and who could give me unbiased translations and verifications of the transcriptions.

Bilingualism was an advantage in this research. Some isiXhosa speaking participants were not completely confident in their English usage and seemed shy to speak at first. They relaxed when they realized that I was comfortable with them speaking isiXhosa if they

struggled to express something in English. That allowed for the conversations to flow easily and ensured that the interviews could be completed in a relaxed atmosphere. The content of the interviews improved when the participants felt comfortable and could express themselves in either language.

Language emerged as one of the reasons why documents were not completed during this study. Some of the teachers found it difficult to interpret the SIAS documents or the psychologist's reports sufficiently to feel confident about filling in the forms (refer to Section 5.6). This contributed to the lack of policy implementation.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodology that was used in this study to attain the research goals. This study uses a qualitative research approach using the interpretive framework to answer the research questions. It has explained the research design decision to use a case study which used interviews, observations and document analysis to collect the data. It also discussed issues of trustworthiness and the ethics of this research as I proceeded in analysing the data in order to present the findings in the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

4.1 Introduction

As the data analysis for this qualitative research was conducted over a period of time, I found that the analysis could be broadly subdivided into the three research goals as set out in the introductory chapter and in Chapter Three (see Sections 1.6 and 3.3). These goals became the themes that helped with analysis and coding of the data. The next three chapters attempt to present this process as clearly as possible.

The subject of this chapter is an analysis of the data relating to the first research goal, which was to describe and analyse how teachers at a particular primary school understand and implement Inclusive Education through the SIAS strategy. To study the implementation of any policy means one looks at how a policy is put into effect. To provide an overview of the policy implementation it is necessary to look at how the educational district, as well as the Welcome Primary School at which the study was conducted, set about this process of implementing the SIAS strategy. I was aware of the importance of the "ongoing consideration of context" in which this particular policy implementation has taken place and to be reflexive and rigorous in the analysis and understanding of the developments within the context of the school's implementation of the policy (Lotz-Sisitka & Janse van Rensburg, 2006, p. 5). Thus, it was necessary not only to constantly ask how unique the school is, but to also recognize those aspects of policy implementation that could apply to other similar schools.

It is, however, important to state that this research project is specific to the area in which I was working and does not necessarily reflect what is happening in other educational districts of the Eastern Cape Province or, for that matter, in other South African provinces.

4.2 The implementation timeframe within the local educational district

The process of implementing the SIAS strategy began when the national office of the Department of Education began rolling out the new policy at the end of 2008. The Eastern

Cape Province held a workshop for the members of the Education and Social Support Services (hereafter referred to as ESSS) from all the Eastern Cape district offices which then, in turn, ran workshops for the schools in their districts. The local district office also offered workshops to schools introducing them to the concept of barriers to learning and learner identification. The SIAS strategy was introduced to other government departments within the district, such as the Department of Health, the Department of Social Development and the South African Police Services to explain their role in the implementation of the strategy. All the workshops were run on the 'cascade method' of training which was discussed under Section 2.6.2. This had the effect that the information was re-interpreted a number of times before it actually reached the end-users, namely the teachers.

The following table gives a timeframe for the SIAS strategy implementation by the local district office from December 2008 to December 2009 and shows where the Welcome Primary School was involved:

Table 4.1: SIAS strategy implementation by the local district office (the first 12 months)

	Date	Activity	Participants
1	3-4 December 2008	Provincial Training Workshop on the SIAS strategy	Inclusive Directorate of Education from Bisho; representatives of ESSS offices from all the Eastern Cape Education Districts; principals, teachers and therapists from special needs schools.
2	9-10 March 2009	Advocacy Workshop: Barriers to learning (organised by the local university)	Teachers from all local schools, including teachers from Welcome Primary School.
3	12 May – 3 June 2009	Four 2 day workshops across the district: Introduction to SIAS	Teams of teachers from all the schools, including the Welcome Primary School. (These teams were future ILST teams)
4	9 October 2009	DBST meeting with various government departments to explain SIAS	Members of ESSS of the DBE, Department of Health, SA Police, Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Development
5	23 October 2009	Sensitizing DoH to 4 Stages of SIAS	Members of the Department of Health: Therapists, psychologist, and managers.
6	26 October 2009	DBST meeting to place learners at special school	Members of the DBST from DBE, 2 Special School ILSTs, Developmental Clinic, DoH, Representative from the Municipality
7	18-19 November 2009	ESSS Workshop: Learner Identification	Foundation Phase teachers from all the local schools including Welcome Primary School.

This table shows that there was training within the district during 2009. From the beginning of the implementation process, at the May/June 2009 workshops (row 3 of the table above), teachers expressed their concerns regarding implementation, citing administrative overload, lack of support from colleagues, lack of support from the DBST, lack of parental involvement and concerns that colleagues not attending the workshop would not accept the process (Various teachers, pers. comm., May 2009). By October, a representative of the District Office ESSS stated at the meeting with the Department of Health (row 4 above) that EWP6 was a challenge for the Department of Education. A second member of the ESSS Office at the same meeting claimed they had a 50% success rate with the implementation of the ILSTs at those schools where the principals were involved (ESSS officials, pers. comm., October 2009). This could imply that the involvement of the principal in the implementation of the SIAS strategy at a school is critical. At the November 2009 workshop (row 7 above), teachers were asking for practical demonstrations from the DBST to show them how to complete the SIAS documents (Various teachers, pers. comm., November 2009) as they were unsure what was required of them.

At no time during this year of the roll-out of the SIAS strategy did teachers or district officials express confidence in the implementation of the policy. An aspect that I did not research explicitly was whether the documents were ever really read by teachers or officials. It seemed that small sections of the document were more familiar to individuals than the whole. What the cause of this resistance to reading policy documents is was not clear but it is an area that needs further research.

As the MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape Province spoke of Inclusive Education as "that *section* of education" in October 2012 (4 years after the launch of the SIAS strategy and 11 years after the introduction of EWP6), and equates it to the "special needs sector of education", I am concerned that Inclusive Education principles are not sufficiently understood by education officials in the Eastern Cape Province (DBE Eastern Cape, October 2012). In 2007 it had already been stated that "inclusive education cannot be driven by special needs education directorates" (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 3) and for its implementation to succeed it must be relocated within education (also refer to Section 2.3.3). This was not done in the Eastern Cape and the 2012 Indaba was again attended by

officials from the Inclusive Directorate. If these officials are struggling to grasp the meaning of Inclusive Education then this raises the question of how teachers at a local primary school will understand the concept.

4.3 The Welcome Primary School context

As can be seen from table 4.1, the Welcome Primary School participated in the various workshops that related to the SIAS strategy. I selected the Welcome Primary School from a number of possible primary schools, noting their participation in the workshops as one of the reasons for their selection. The contextual background to the Welcome Primary School was explained in the previous chapter under Section 3.7.1. The reason for this selection was that this school is fairly typical of schools situated in the local township area and I wanted to gain insight into how a school that is very much like the majority of South African primary schools (i.e. dealing with poverty, lack of resources, over-crowding, amongst other challenges) is implementing policy within the Inclusive Education framework.

The school has been at its present location since 1988. The incumbent principal has been at the school since 1999. She is very aware of the challenges facing the school and is willing to "welcome everybody who supports our endeavours" and says her school is "willing to try new ideas" (Principal, pers. comm., 2010). According to one of the teachers, there are people in the township who refer to the Welcome Primary School as "the Model C school of the township" (Teacher, pers. comm., 2009). In this context, a Model C school would refer to a school that is functional with teachers in classrooms teaching their classes.

4.3.1 The participants for this study

During the research period I interacted with all the staff members at the school, but only interviewed 11 of the 18 teachers. This was because I needed to speak to those teachers who were on the school's management team and those who were involved with the learner assessment system. The sampling for this study is discussed in detail under Section 3.8.

To help with the understanding of the analysis that will follow, it is important to present the profiles of the teachers who participated in the research again, for ease of reference. I also felt it was important to show their involvement with policy to facilitate the understanding of

the data analysis. The profiles of these teachers and their involvement with the SIAS strategy are summarized in the following table (which expands on the table 3.1 in Section 3.8):

Table 4.2: Teacher profiles

TEACHER CODE	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE	POST LEVEL	PHASE TAUGHT (at the time of research)	ATTENDED SIAS STRATEGY TRAINING	RECEIVED SIAS TRAINING AT SCHOOL	SERVES ON THE ILST
FP1	17	1	Foundation Phase	YES	YES	YES
FP2	33	1	Foundation Phase	NO	NO	NO
FP3	29	1	Foundation Phase	NO	YES	ADVISES
FP4	16	1	Foundation Phase	NO	YES	ADVISES
FP5	34	2	Foundation Phase	YES	YES	YES
FP6	15	1	Foundation Phase	YES	YES	YES
IP1	39	3	Intermediate Phase	NO	YES	YES
IP2	18	1	Intermediate Phase	NO	NO	NO
IP3	6	1	Intermediate Phase	YES	YES	YES
IP4	26	2	Intermediate Phase	NO	YES	YES
IP5	26	4	Intermediate Phase	NO	NO	NO

This table shows that, of those six participants that serve on the ILST committee, four attended the training workshop, while all six did receive some form of training at the school to begin the implementation of the SIAS strategy. It is also worth noting that those teachers

in management positions all have 26 or more years' teaching experience, which means they would have been exposed to some policy implementation workshops over the years.

4.3.2 Implementation of Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) at Welcome Primary School

Inclusive Education was launched in South Africa in 2001, with the introduction of EWP6. This document (see Section 2.5) defined inclusive education as a policy that acknowledges that all children can learn, need support, and that their participation in education should be maximized while barriers to learning should be minimized (DoE, 2001, p. 6).

The participants were interviewed 10 years after the implementation of EWP6. I discussed Inclusive Education with them and asked every participant about their knowledge of the EWP6 policy according to the interview schedule (see Appendix A). I chose to tabulate the findings as follows:

Table 4.3: Teachers' understanding of Inclusive Education (IE)

Teachers understand IE as:	FP1	FP2	FP3	FP4	FP5	FP6	IP1	IP 2	IP3	IP 4	IP5	TOTAL
1. Including all learners in ordinary public schools					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
2. Working with learners with disabilities in ordinary public schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	9
3. Working with different ability groups in classrooms	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	7
4. Educating severely disabled learners at special needs schools		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	6
5. Providing appropriate support for individual learners in ordinary public schools				✓		✓			✓		✓	4

Most participants accepted that Inclusive Education was about including all learners in the education system and that learners with disabilities were part of the ordinary public school system (rows 1 and 2). Whether they actually did this in their classes was not always clear, but the perception of what would be 'the correct' approach to an inclusive education system, was stated in the interviews. Row 2 refers to 'working' with learners experiencing barriers to learning rather than 'including' learners. This difference could be as a result of language challenges in the interpretation of the word 'include'. In contrast, only 4 understood that inclusive education entailed the provision of appropriate support for individual learners within public, ordinary schools (Row 5). Only two of these four

participants (FP6 and IP3) had attended the SIAS workshops. Working with different ability groups was perceived as an inclusive strategy and was a pedagogical approach favoured mostly by those teachers who were involved with the Foundation Phase (Row 3).

There is, therefore, some level of understanding of what is meant by Inclusive Education. Every teacher interviewed understood it was about including children who were encountering learning difficulties within the education system. There is, however, a perception that they would not cope with learners that have severe disabilities, both physically and intellectually, as they are not equipped or trained to deal with these children. My study in this respect concurs with that of Savolainen et al, (2012) who found a similar situation (refer to Section 2.6.1). The following examples help to illustrate this point:

> "If we have to be honest, we are afraid of severe problems, but we take them, we are trying" (FP2, p. 3);
>
> "…we were never trained on that, but we are doing it" (IP5, p. 1);
>
> "…we don't have those facilities" (IP2, p. 1);
>
> "Yes, education is inclusive but we don't have all the facilities here" (IP1, p. 8).

While accepting that Inclusive Education is about including all learners in one system, there is a trend towards wanting to remove those learners who have serious disabilities into a special school, as seen from Row 4 above. This is contrary to the further definitions on Inclusive Education as set out in EWP 6 (p. 7), which see inclusion as changes within the school "to meet the needs of all learners" as well as maximizing all learners' participation "in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions" (DoE, 2001, p. 7). One reason given is the relatively large classes that the teachers have to deal with and this is seen by a number of teachers as preventing them from implementing support strategies for learners who experience barriers to learning (FP4, p. 7; IP3, p. 18).

Linked to these implementation challenges is a lack of engagement with the actual policy documents.

4.4 Policy documents

The two documents discussed with the teachers were the *Education White Paper 6*, known as EWP6 (DoE, 2001) and also the *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support*, known as the SIAS strategy (DoE, 2008a) which were discussed under Section 2.5.

4.4.1 Knowledge of Education White Paper 6 (EWP6)

One of the six strategies of EWP6 is to "change the ethos of mainstream schools to become inclusive schools by improving the system of identifying, assessing and placing learners who need support needs" (refer to 2.5). Welcome Primary School had representatives at three of the district meetings (refer to Table 4.1). At each of these meetings, they were told about *Education White Paper 6* and the SIAS strategy. This exposure to the documents amounted to a total of about ten hours of workshop time and only those teachers that came to the workshops would have benefited from the lectures and activities. The time spent with these documents was limited and the school has no evidence currently that the documents are, in fact, used in the school in their original form. This does raise questions about the quality of the workshops.

Actual knowledge of the *Education White Paper 6*, which was launched in 2001, was very limited amongst the participants. This limited knowledge, according to the participants, has been acquired more through referral to EWP6 by officials or management, rather than by a critical engagement with the content of EWP6 or any training. This is interesting as a number of the participants attended the workshops discussed in Table 4.1 where the EWP6 was discussed. In addition, I conducted a follow-up workshop for the Welcome Primary School staff on the SIAS strategy in 2010.

The EWP6 is supposed to be the foundation on which Inclusive Education in South Africa is based. It is this EWP6 that has informed the SIAS strategy that ordinary public schools must now engage with when seeking support for learners who experience barriers to learning. In my research, I found the following statements about EWP6:

- "..we didn't see it as a staff" - IP2;

- "..you even forgot to go to the principal and ask for this book" - FP4;
- "..I don't remember" - IP4; IP1 and FP2;
- "..unfortunately I think we don't know too much" - FP5;
- "..But nothing happened about the copy. It was just there." - FP6;
- "..We were not used to it – it is not in our hands" - IP1;
- "..I remember they talked about it" - FP3;
- "..White Paper 6…Nobody was ever trained"- IP5;
- "…sometimes you discuss these things, then you forgot where you got it" – FP2;
- "..but I don't remember much, but I've seen it" – IP3.

However, one teacher (FP1) felt that EWP6 gave teachers information about learners experiencing barriers to learning related to reading and writing, which is not specifically covered in the EWP 6 document. This referral, therefore, could be to *Guidelines for inclusive learning programmes* (DoE, 2005) that were issued to some schools in late 2005.

Those teachers who attended the SIAS training workshop in 2009, were most likely to state they had seen the EWP6, but that it was not a document that every teacher would have read or have in their possession. This confirms Ntombela's (2011, p. 9) finding that EWP6 was "piggybacking" on other policy training rather than being presented on its own to teachers. One participant thought it may have been issued to the Head of Department attending the workshop who, in turn, would have stored the documents in the principal's office. Policy is kept safely in the office where district officials would see it. This was, however, clearly not translating into a 'user-friendly' document to be read and implemented within the school.

As a facilitator for the Department of Education's workshops on the SIAS strategy in 2009 and, as a teacher coming from a special needs education background, I was under the impression that ordinary public schools were as informed about EWP6 as the special schools

in the province had been. Special Schools or Resource Centre management staff have engaged more with EWP6 than the ordinary public schools, which is an anomaly. Ordinary public schools are the schools that should be implementing Inclusive Education, but they are the schools with the least information on what constitutes an inclusive policy, stating that:

- "White Paper 6….nobody was ever trained on this"(B11, p. 1);
- "We were not given training. That's why it is very difficult for us as teachers, even though there are those kids with those problems, ...to deal with them" (IP4, p. 4).

This research suggests that, within the context of the Welcome Primary School, the training that participants received around the implementation of an inclusive education system was not conducted in such a way as to add value to a no-fee-paying school. This ties in with Naicker's (2006) observation (referred to in Section 2.6.2) that Inclusive Education training was left to bureaucrats who lacked epistemological understanding of what it entailed and this left educators unsure of how to implement Inclusive Education. He feels that "policy relating to inclusion….is stuck at a political level since it ignored epistemological issues in the training of educationists" (Naicker, 2006, p. 2). My experience when training the teachers at Welcome Primary School in 2010, showed that most teachers had not engaged with policy documents to any notable degree because they had never been trained on EWP6. In the district where this study was done, it appears that only some teachers at the special needs school were exposed to any Inclusive Education training.

4.4.2 Knowledge of the SIAS strategy

The SIAS strategy was introduced to the schools of the district in 2009 through workshops held over 2 afternoons (refer to Table 4.1, row 3 and Section 4.4.1). After the workshops the schools were then expected to implement this policy immediately.

To understand the SIAS strategy more clearly in the context of the data (referred to in Chapter 2, under 2.7.2.3), a quick summary is given of the process using the SIAS School Pack (DoE, 2008, pp 26-31).

The SIAS strategy (Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support) involves 4 stages: Stages 1 and 2, which involve screening and identification, and are about discovering what the barrier to learning is that a learner is experiencing and the planning of support for the learner at school level. Stages 3 and 4 are about assessment and support and are designed for the requesting and provisioning of additional support from outside the school.

To gauge the understanding of the SIAS strategy by the teachers at Welcome Primary School, I asked the following questions based on the interview schedule (Appendix A):

- Can you tell me about the SIAS strategy?
- What is your understanding of the ILST and DBST?
- How do you think a school can implement the SIAS strategy?

Here is a summary of teachers' understandings of the SIAS strategy at Welcome Primary School:

Table 4.4: Teachers' understanding of the SIAS strategy

Teacher	Understanding of the SIAS strategy
FP1 (ILST committee)	"SIAS strategy I understand is concerned about learners who are struggling. So you get information about each and every child who is struggling." (p.4)
FP2	This teacher gave no direct answers and has partially filled in one form as "the parents are not coming". This participant did not seem sure about the SIAS strategy. (p. 4)
FP3	"Once we identify the learner's problem, then we interview the parents about the problems of the learner. We try to intervene more and more and give support to the learners. There is a little bit of light now,… more than before." When asked about the actual SIAS document, she said: "I need help, because there are some things which are not clear." (p. 4)
FP4 (advises ILST committee)	"We've got some of the forms there….the ILST" (p. 3). "You tell her I want to refer so-and-so, and then she gives you the forms" (p. 4). This teacher also felt that the SIAS documents pulled information together in one form about a child – information was less scattered around in various books or files (p. 13).
FP5 (ILST committee)	This teacher remembers the training for the SIAS strategy and says she only worked with the documents at the workshop. When asked if the school uses the forms, she answered: "I don't know – not really", but admits to being a member of the ILST: "we are part of that" (p.12).

FP6 (ILST committee)	When asked about the SIAS documents, this teacher responded: "they are not working because when you give these forms to the teachers and tell them they must do the forms for the child to be assessed and then to follow up, they will just give it back to me and say: Sisi, I don't know what is this! It's your thing, so please do it for me. It's hard for me." When asked if the DBST returns the forms once they have been submitted, she said: "It's not happening" (p. 7).
IP1 (ILST committee)	This teacher also found that teachers were resistant to filling in the forms when "they see the large amount" of administrative work. They would rather say: "I've got nobody who is disabled or has got a problem". She felt the forms needed to be simplified (p. 5).
IP2	When asked about the SIAS strategy, this teacher replied: "I didn't get the copy", but she understood that she referred a child with a barrier to the ILST coordinator (p. 6).
IP3 (ILST committee)	This teacher had used the SIAS documents to do "the first part" and referred learners for psychological assessments, but found that the forms "never came back" from the DBST – she only received the psychologist's report. She had succeeded in having one of her learners admitted to the special school (pp. 2-4).
IP4 (ILST committee)	When asked if the school uses the SIAS documents, this teacher replied: "no". She also stated that a teacher would refer a child with a problem to the assessment committee and not the ILST coordinator. This teacher serves on the ILST committee stating: "We are part of that" (p. 12).
IP5	This teacher was not involved directly as she felt learner assessment was a "curriculum issue, and the curriculum matters are handled by the deputy principal". In addition, she felt that the school's interaction with the DBST was "very limited" (p. 3).

This summary table shows the wide range of engagement with the SIAS strategy. Even amongst the members of the ILST there are different levels of understanding of the SIAS strategy – from trying to use the documents (IP3; FP6) to stating that the school does not use the documents (IP4; IP2). This helps to explain why the ILST coordinator was feeling unsupported by her colleagues and often needed to complete the forms herself. It is difficult to ascertain why some teachers engage with policy (even if only on a limited basis), while others simply appear to ignore it. A possible explanation is that teachers do not find the documents 'clear' (see FP3) or 'know what this is' (FP6). The principal of the special needs school also found the documents very difficult to work with and had to adapt the

Learner Pack to be able to gain the information that was necessary to establish the support needs of the learners (Principal of special needs school, pers. comm., 2011).

A concern that emerges is the lack of support from the District Based Support Team (DBST) that should be playing a crucial role in the implementation of the SIAS strategy. The documents are supposed to be moved through all the four stages of the strategy by the DBST as they work with the school's ILST but FP6 and IP3 both state that the documents are never returned to them for further completion of the forms.

4.5 The District Based Support Team (DBST)

This DBST team (refer to Section 2.5) is based at the district office of education and falls under the section known as the Education and Social Support Services (ESSS). Two of the basic functions of the DBST are to train the schools' Institution Level Support Teams (ILST) and to assist educators with interventions for learners requiring high levels of support (DoE, 2008, p. 102). However, Bloch (2009) found that vacancies, inexperienced staffing and inadequate prioritisation at district offices meant that they could not function as "sites of support to schools" (Bloch, 2009, p. 111). This was confirmed at the Welcome Primary School where there was very little interaction with the local DBST (also refer to Table 4.4, FP6 and IP3). The following comments sum up the level of interaction with the school during 2011:

- "But…the department…there things go so slow. They take time" (IP3, p. 18).
- "….with the district office you know, is that they sit there and if you say we have got so many children…. They don't come and monitor" ....."At least [Mr X] is not like the other EDO's there – he is trying his best" (IP1, p. 10).
- When asked about the DBST returning forms to the school, she said: "It's not happening" (FP6, p. 7). But then said: "Mr X was there……..and I asked Mr X to help me about that" (FP6, p. 8).
- "Mr X, at the circuit office…. He went to [a learner's] home and told about this report" (FP3, p. 6).

- Interaction with the DBST: “It’s very limited, but there is a man there, Mr X, who goes out of his way to come and help and support” (IP5, p. 3).

These comments strongly suggest that the DBST was not seen positively as a team, but that there is one member of the DBST who has interacted with the school during the year. When the principal was asked directly whether the coordinator of the local DBST came to the school, the principal replied that she came once or twice a year. The ILST coordinator does appreciate the individual intervention of the one member of the DBST who took on two cases and conducted workshops for the staff during 2011. He is, however, not able to direct the DBST, as that is not his job and very often he is sent on other assignments when the full DBST is supposed to meet. He is the one with direct knowledge of the learners that must be referred for specialized education, but for reasons that are unclear, he is unable to attend every meeting (DBST meeting, 2011). This presents certain challenges to all schools as an ILST team really needs to have close ties with the DBST to function effectively when using the SIAS strategy. During the third phase of my research I was informed by the ILST co-ordinator that Mr X was no longer coming to their school during 2012.

4.6 The Institution Level Support Team (ILST) at Welcome Primary School

This team is based at the school and consists of educators whose task it is to determine learners’ barriers to learning and then to assess learners’ support needs (see Sections 2.5 and 2.7.1). The ILST’s core function is described as providing support for “the teaching and learning process” within a school (DoE, 2008, p. 88).

When interviewing the Welcome Primary School teachers two years after their initial training and exposure to the SIAS strategy, a number of factors emerged. The ILST team at the Welcome Primary School consists of the coordinator, the deputy principal, two heads of department, and a teacher from each grade. As the coordinator’s anonymity in this case study is ethically required, I do not identify her directly but refer to her as Mrs I.

The principal admitted to not working closely with the coordinator, preferring to leave this work with the deputy principal who is responsible for curriculum matters. Mrs I found many aspects of her work very challenging during 2011. Besides being the coordinator of the ILST, she had to supervise the School Nutrition Programme (SNP) and assist with the ordering of

learning and teaching materials (LTSM). She is also the fulltime teacher of a large Grade 1 class that she regards as her primary responsibility as a teacher. Mrs I does not perceive all staff as supporting her in her role as ILST coordinator, particularly in the intermediate phase (see also Table 4.5). This is borne out by the following:

- "I've got a team but we are not working cooperatively…they will just sit there. If I call for the meeting, some will come, others will not come. And they will say in a meeting: Oh we don't know anything about this ILST" (FP6, p. 9).

- "Teachers can grumble and say what and what….. and the management must back up Mrs I. Mrs I must not work alone" (IP1, p. 18).

- "I wouldn't say [the staff] fully support her" (IP5, p. 3).

- The two heads of department would not name Mrs I by name but both claimed to be part of the ILST: "….and we are also there. We are part of that" (IP4 and FP5, p. 12).

This lack of support could be ascribed to a resistance to additional paperwork, but I did find that many teachers could not understand the language and meaning of the SIAS documents (refer to Section 3.13.3). If I unpacked a section with a teacher, step by step, she felt more confident and could answer the questions. I also noted that teachers had extensive verbal knowledge about a learner but failed to record this knowledge on paper (Field Notes, 12 August 2011 and refer to Section 5.6).

However, most of the teachers generally had a good relationship with the ILST coordinator and recognized her as the person to approach if they had a learner that was in need of support. This became evident through responses to the interview question: "Could you explain the steps you take at your school when you have a learner with a barrier to learning?"

- "Yes, yes, she does ask them [for evidence], because you can't just tell her verbally. She will ask you what you have done with this child. And then you will show her the work, you will come with the books and show her" (IP2, p. 15).

- "Then when I go… and say this child has got a problem… and Mrs I will intervene" (IP3, p. 8).

- "Mrs I gives us the forms. When you want the forms you go to her. You tell her I want to refer so-and-so, and then she gives you the forms" (FP4, p. 4).

- "Yes [the ILST] works because we've got a committee …….. there's someone there who is responsible for SIAS. All teachers there give names of learners who are struggling; then the teacher in charge there, sends their names and tries to ask the barriers to learning" FP1, p. 4).

- "Mrs I helps us a lot, because she is good….she is good" (FP3, p. 5).

Although teachers made these statements during their interviews, they often did not show their support practically, especially when Mrs I states that she is left to fill in the forms as the teachers "don't want to be responsible" (FP6, p. 9). Mrs I feels that being a post level 1 teacher and having to instruct senior staff members is often challenging. There are statements made that she is "behaving like an HOD" (FP6, p. 6), but is not one. This hierarchy issue was raised at the first SIAS workshop in 2009 by a teacher from a different school stating that her colleagues would never listen to her feedback from the workshop (my personal communication). Mrs I felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities placed on her, but her commitment to the learners kept her going. The amount of administrative work she has to cope with on top of teaching is substantial and she expresses this as "my hands are so full at school" (FP6, p. 21).

These comments tie in with the following section, where I have attempted to summarise the teachers' relationship to the SIAS process within the school.

4.7 Teachers' interaction with the SIAS process

The themes that emerged pertaining to the SIAS process were analysed by collecting the information and presenting it in the following tabulated form. This was done to gain a clearer picture of this phenomenon and to see if any patterns emerged.

Table 4.5: Teachers' involvement with the SIAS strategy process

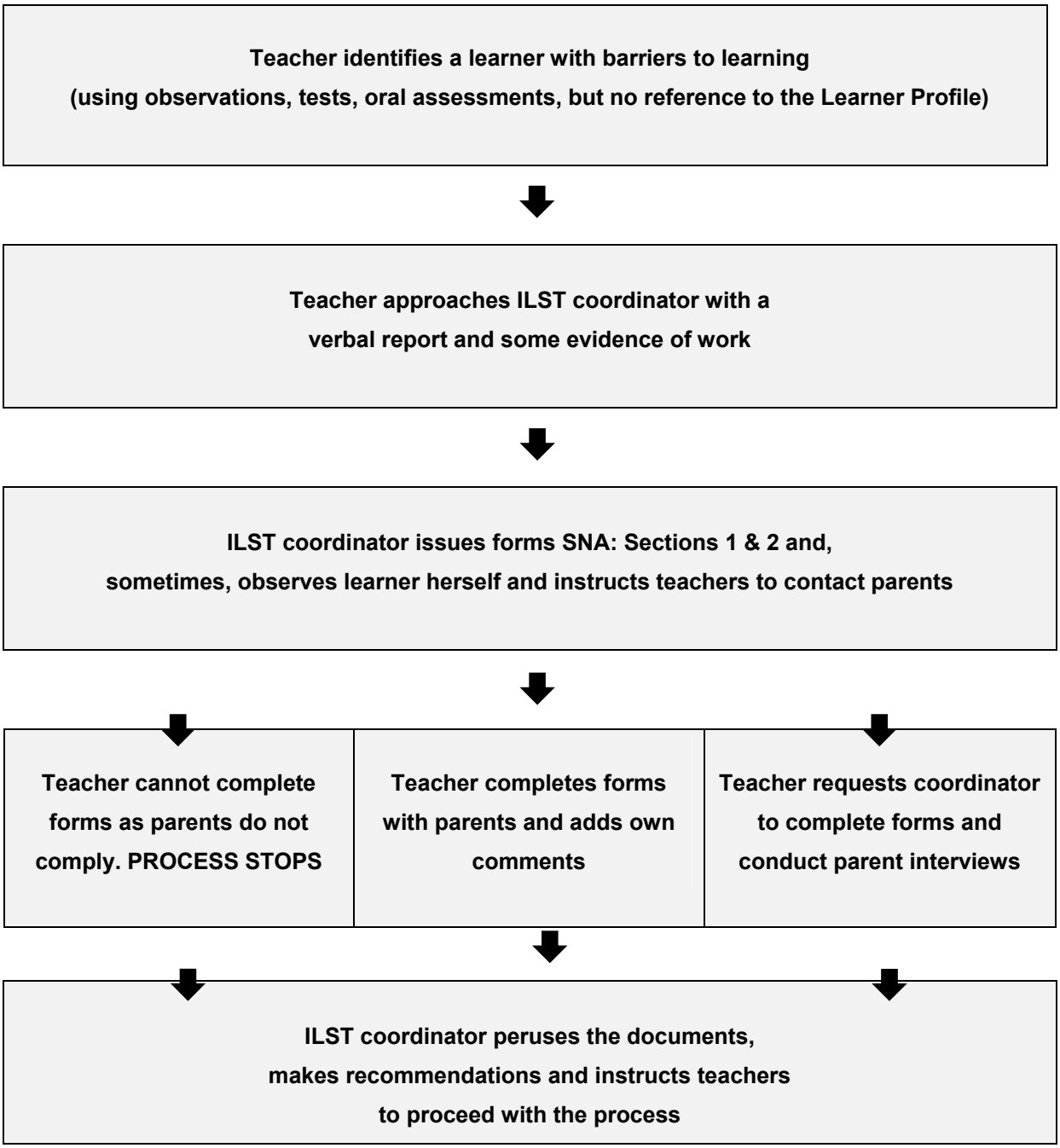
	FP1	FP2	FP3	FP4	FP5	FP6	IP1	IP2	IP3	IP4	IP5
Recognises ILST coordinator and her role	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	Not Directly
Understands internal referral **process** as done by ILST	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
R**efers** learners to a psychologist or the psychiatric hospital	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓		✓	✓	×	×
C**ompletes** forms SNA 1 & 2	Not clear	Partial	✓	✓	×	✓			✓	×	×

According to this table, most teachers understand that there is an ILST at the school. An interesting point is that the two teachers who do not seem to directly acknowledge the coordinator are in management positions. All teachers who are not in management positions understand that they need to consult Mrs I if they identify a learner with support needs. She then advises them to contact the parents, to fill in the forms (namely, forms SNA: Sections 1 and 2), and to refer the learner with his/her parents for a psychological assessment. Another point of concern is the lack of involvement of the school's management team with the SIAS process. Their lack of engagement with the actual ILST group, policy documents or procedures is evident. Initially, it could be presumed that management members do not have direct contact with the children, but at the Welcome Primary School everyone teaches either a class or a subject. Of the six members of the ILST who are represented in this study, only two have actually completed the forms (IP3 and FP6).

To further understand the challenges the Welcome Primary School faces when implementing the SIAS policy, I decided to unpack the school's internal referral process.

4.8 Welcome Primary School's internal referral process using the SIAS strategy

To understand to what extent Welcome Primary School is implementing the SIAS strategy, I looked at the school's current referral process. The following diagram illustrates this process, which incorporates the data from Section 4.7. I will then compare this information to the equivalent diagram contained in the SIAS strategy (School Pack, DoE, 2008a):



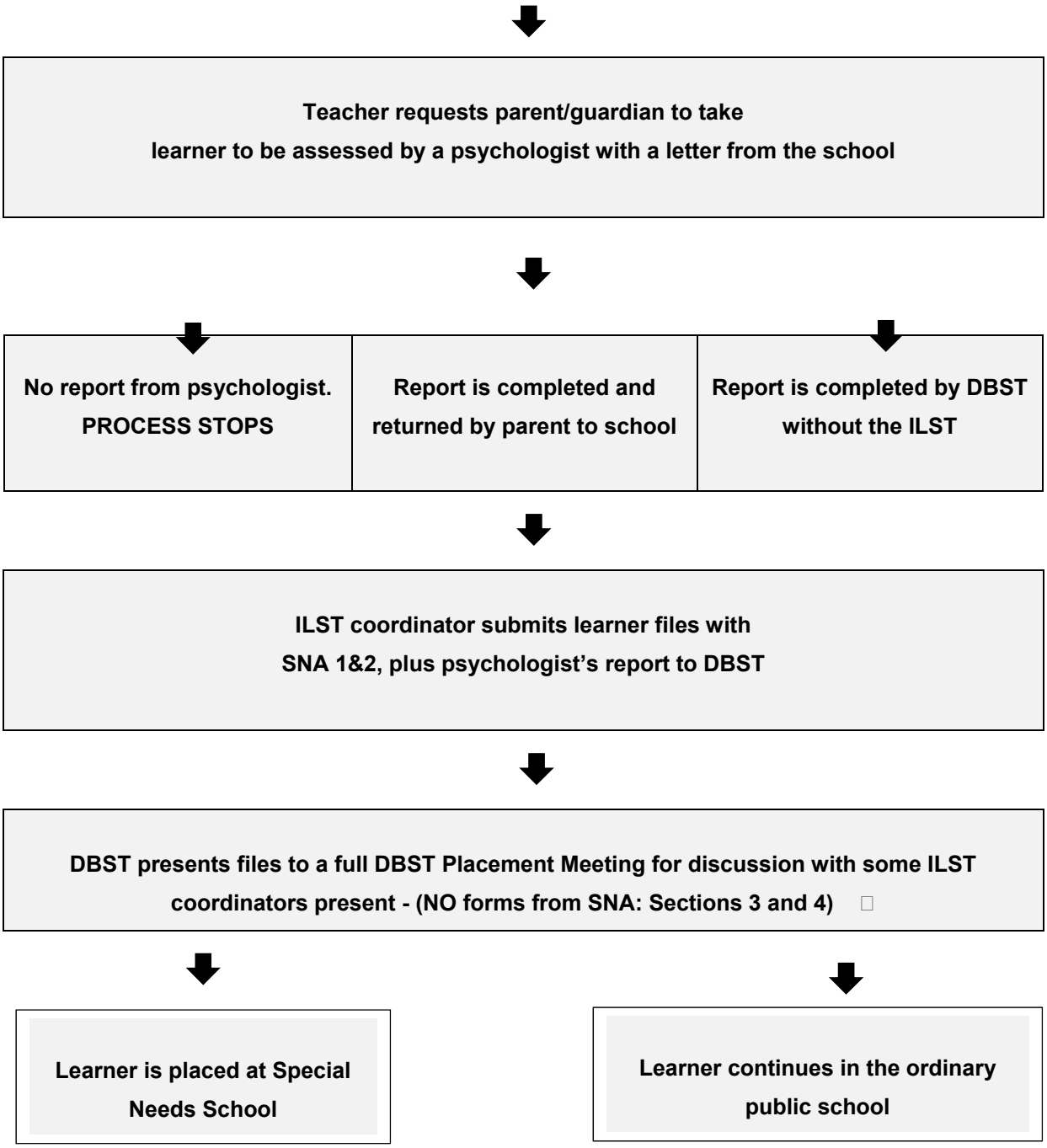


Figure 4.1: The Welcome Primary School's internal referral process

If considering the 4 stages of the SIAS process (refer to 2.7.2.3), the above diagram shows that at the Welcome Primary School the first two stages are dealt with to some degree (i.e. screening and identification). To get a clearer idea of what the school should be doing, I have created a section of the SIAS diagram (DoE, 2008a, p. 23) for comparative purposes.

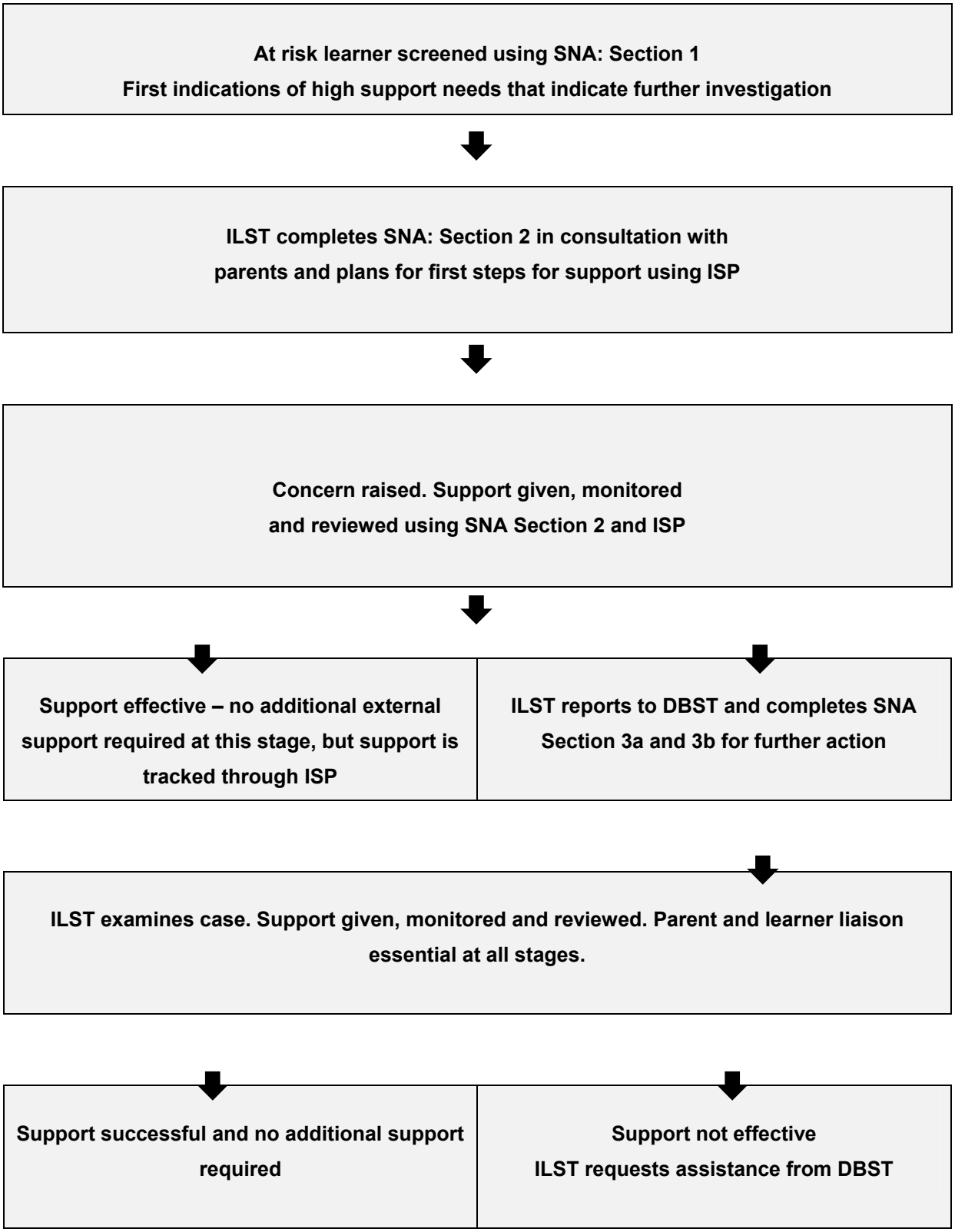


Figure 4.2: Learner Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Process (adapted from DoE, 2008a, p. 23)

This diagram shows that the internal referral process at Welcome Primary School is loosely based on the SIAS strategy. However, only the first two blocks of the SIAS process correspond to some extent with the first four steps followed by the Welcome Primary School. It could be said that it is a process that is functional to the extent that the coordinator of the ILST at the school drives the different stages. When comparing the Welcome Primary School with other schools in the district, it became apparent that the Welcome Primary School uses the SIAS strategy primarily to refer learners to the special needs school while other schools seldom complete the necessary documents (DBST placement meetings). There is little evidence that an Individual Support Plan is drawn up for a learner needing higher levels of support at Welcome Primary School and there is no evidence of a review process. As seen in Section 4.6, the coordinator feels a lack of support from her team and the school's management and this may play a role in the way the school implements the policy.

In addition, the referral process is also strongly influenced by the level to which parents are prepared to become involved in the process (see Section 6.7). It was outlined in Section 2.7.1 that parents did not understand their role in the assessment and support of their children. Often, teachers managed to get the parents to the school but then did not do the interview themselves, preferring to ask the coordinator to do this. Many parents do not come to school at all when asked to come to see a teacher, delaying the process of intervention for the learner for various reasons (also refer to Section 6.7.4).

The first stages of the SIAS process are being conducted at the school, but the information provided is not as yet of a standard that clearly informs the DBST or the special needs school of the learner's barriers to learning and, therefore, the level of support needed. The teachers are not yet skilled in the process of interpreting their assessment results (also see Section 5.6). These skills would assist the teachers in designing the intervention programme for the learner and beginning an Individual Support Plan (ISP) as indicated in the SIAS strategy in Figure 4.2.

Again, the information gained from the SIAS process seems, at this stage, not to be utilised to analyse the learning disabilities of the learners. In Figure 4.2 for example, support,

monitoring and reviewing are clearly indicated. None of these words appear in the school's referral process.

During the period of this research, the teachers seemed unable to provide support for the learners with these challenges. For example, if a teacher found that the learner is reversing numbers or letters, she does not see that there could be underlying factors and/or barriers like laterality problems. Addressing the barriers to learning using a reflexive approach to teaching is not yet apparent in most of the teachers. There is, however, some evidence of a willingness to learn new skills. This is borne out by the teachers' willingness to communicate with me. They invited me to their classrooms and successfully utilized worksheets I made for them, and this indicated to me that support to the teachers within the context of their classrooms was far more valuable to them than the time spent at the workshops in 2009. This finding agrees with a number of studies done relating to context-specific training of teachers as discussed in Section 2.6.2.

4.9 Overview of the SIAS implementation process at Welcome Primary School

At the Welcome Primary School where the research was done, the SIAS strategy was being implemented up to Stage 2, but with no evidence of an Individual Support Plan (ISP) as yet.

The Learner Profile (refer to Sections 2.7.2.2 and 5.4), which forms the first step of the process and contains all the basic information about a learner, was handed out in May 2011 (Field notes: 10 May 2011) by the ILST coordinator. At the same meeting the DBST member stressed the importance of the Learner Profile in the assessment process. By November 2011 the Learner Profiles were not yet completed by all teachers as parents were not providing all the necessary information (FP6, p.6). Those learners that needed additional support had been referred to psychologists and a few had a completed report from the psychologist (DBST minutes, 16 August 2011 and 11 October 2011). None of these reports were, however, filled in on the Diagnostic Profile (which is the form that a health practitioner must complete in the SIAS Learner Pack), as the local hospital prefers to use its own method of reporting.

The ILST coordinator gives teachers the necessary forms, the SNA Section 1 and 2 forms, to fill in on photocopied sheets and not in the SIAS Support Needs Assessment Learner Pack

book. These forms require that the teacher interviews the parent/s or guardians of the learner. The teacher must also analyse the various barriers that the learner encounters, both extrinsically (within the school and community) and intrinsically (within the learner). Very few teachers feel confident about completing the forms and, therefore, the information written down is not sufficient to make informed decisions regarding the learner's support needs (FP6, p. 7; IP1, p. 5; FP3, p 4; Field notes 11 August 2011).

The one psychologist who was seconded to the district office was very frustrated by the lack of information provided by teachers to assist her in making an informed diagnosis (DBST Minutes, 11 October 2011) and this was making the full assessment of the learner's support needs difficult. Teachers do try to intervene by supporting the learners with extra attention, after school help and placing the learners in ability groups, but there is not yet an understanding of recording intervention strategies or of drawing up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Support Plan (ISP).

An area of concern is the fact that Stages 3 and 4 are not being dealt with at all by the DBST at the local district office. Sections 3a and 3b are never completed and Section 4 has not been done for a single learner in the district, which means that the local DBST is referring learners to the special school without the 'Official Decision' as described in Stage 4 of the SIAS strategy (DoE, 2008a, p. 31).

The documentation for referral is still done on the old versions of referral documents, photostat copies of SNA 1 and 2 from the SIAS toolkit or on an adapted document received from other districts. When forms require the two teams (ILST and DBST) to work together, it is not happening. The DBST is not returning the forms for the third and fourth stages to be completed according to the SIAS strategy.

4.10 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter have shown that Inclusive Education advocacy to the ordinary public schools like the Welcome Primary School has not yet been done to a degree that constitutes an in depth understanding of the concept of inclusive education. The implementation, or rather the putting into effect, of the SIAS strategy has only been partially achieved because of challenges pertaining to the interaction between the DBST and

the ILST of the school. The DBST itself does not express confidence in the implementation of EWP6. In addition there is a lack of support and training for the ILST at the Welcome Primary School with only one member of the DBST being seen as helpful. In respect of the school's ILST it can be stated that the coordinator is not sufficiently supported by the members of the team to be able to provide support for the teaching and learning process within the school.

Where the SIAS strategy advocates the use of a single comprehensive book to capture all the support needs of a learner, the reality is very different: information is gathered on a number of unconnected documents that have to be reviewed to gain insight into a learner's support needs. The department's failure to provide the SIAS Learner Packs to schools and the school's lack of resources to create copies of the documents impact negatively on the implementation of the SIAS strategy. Teachers' lack of understanding of the documents required for the process, add to the challenges that prevent the successful implementation of this policy.

The role of the parents in the process of implementation is also very important and the findings show that the SIAS process is compromised because of a general lack of parental involvement. Some of these challenges may be linked to the assessment practices of the teachers and this aspect will be analysed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT OF BARRIERS TO LEARNING

5.1 Introduction

To achieve the second research goal, which was to describe and analyse teachers' practices in assessing barriers to learning and what, if any, problems and difficulties they may be experiencing, I set about observing and interviewing teachers at the Welcome Primary School. Chapter 2 set out the various levels of assessment and methods that are currently available in ordinary primary schools (see Section 2.7.2). They are classroom assessments, the Learner Profile and the SIAS toolkit. Teachers are expected to use these to determine the barriers to learning and, then, to decide on the level of support that a learner needs. This needs a certain level of expertise and training, but with 25% of South African teachers regarded "as unqualified or underqualified" (Bornman & Rose, 2010, p. 8), South African education faces a real challenge in the implementation of its assessment policy. In the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through curriculum and assessment policy statements* teachers are encouraged to be 'inclusive' when conducting assessments as every school is "required to offer the same curriculum to learners while simultaneously ensuring variations in mode of delivery and assessment processes to accommodate all learners" (DBE, 2011, p. 2). My research looks at assessment in an ordinary primary school that is facing multiple challenges in its endeavours to implement policy.

This chapter discusses the various facets of the assessment of barriers to learning within the Welcome Primary School. It looks at the assessment policies that the teachers are expected to use in the process of screening, identifying, assessing and supporting learners who experience barriers to learning and at how teachers deal with these demands.

5.2 Assessment and policy

"In the school setting, assessment is the process of gathering information that enables teachers, together with members of the collaborative team, to meet a child's current and

future educational needs" (Bornman & Rose, 2010, p. 37). This statement underlines the importance of assessment within the whole process of education. In the *National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools in the General Education and Training Band* (DoE, 2007, p. 7), it is stated that learners experiencing barriers to learning and development should be "identified early, assessed, and provided with learning support". This is borne out by the literature that states that support levels must be established as early as possible for intervention to have a positive outcome (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs & Barnes, 2007, p. 274; Wall, 2006, p. 106). The assessment policy also states that the principle of inclusion must be applied by adapting assessment tasks, adjusting the time allocated for assessment tasks, and providing "expanded opportunities" (DoE, 2007, p. 7).

Similarly, it is stated in the SIAS strategy that it hopes to "overhaul the process of identifying, assessing and providing programmes for all learners requiring additional support so as to enhance participation and inclusion" (DOE, 2008a, p. 1). With the introduction of the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* (CAPS) in 2011, it is clearly stated in the *National Protocol for Assessment* (in the section on assessment of learners with special needs) that there needs to be "consistent representation of inclusive assessment practice across all grades" (DBE, 2011, p. 34). Teachers are, therefore, expected to assess the levels of support needs of the learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, but they should have the support of their ILSTs and their local DBST to do this. This, again, indicates that assessment always begins in the classroom with the teachers.

5.3 Teachers' assessment methods at Welcome Primary School

In order to gain a better perspective on assessment procedures followed by the teachers of Welcome Primary School, the following table was compiled based on the interviews and observations.

Table 5.1: Summary of teachers' assessment strategies at Welcome Primary School

Teacher	Use of an observation book	TYPES of testing methods	Use of ILST for further assessment	Other forms of assessment
	INTERMEDIATE PHASE			
IP1	Uses observation book for problem learners	Formal tests to get idea if learners know their work	Feels ILST must be supported	Uses schedules to reflect assessments
IP2	Records learners with problems in her observation book	Formal tests that are recorded in a mark book and on schedules	Refers learners with problems to the ILST	Uses Foundation Phase strategies to help learners in the Intermediate Phase
IP3	Uses observation book to record problem learners	Formal tests and worksheets that are recorded in a mark book	Refers learners to the ILST	Sticks worksheets into books to retain as evidence of learners' work
IP4	Not mentioned	Oral and written tests, classwork and homework inform assessment. Projects part of assessment.	No reference to ILST	Uses DBE templates to record marks
IP5	Refers to the observation book as an interview book	Values weekly report form supplied by DBST (not mentioned by other teachers)	Feels ILST is deputy principal's responsibility	Sees need to hone written reporting skills
	FOUNDATION PHASE			
FP1	Uses observation book for learners with problems	Assesses in ability groups; uses anecdotal records	Refers learners to ILST	Uses assessment book; keeps learner files of their work
FP2	Writes information in observation book	Rubrics and informal assessments; likes separate test books	Refers learners to ILST and colleagues	Learners' books and work inform assessment
FP3	Observes learners to inform levels of support - orally	Assesses individually to establish ability groups.	Refers learners to ILST and DBST	School readiness programmes (that were previously used)

FP4	Uses observation book like a journal	Tests reading, writing, and role playing. Assesses in groups – also uses informal assessment. Files fomal assessment tasks	Refers learners with problems to ILST	Has verbal knowledge – written records hampered by time constraints
FP5	Not mentioned	Continuous assessment; formal testing in separate test books	No reference to ILST	Learners' workbooks inform assessment
FP6	Uses observation book irregularly	Tests individually, or in groups using ability groups. Observes and assesses drawings for content.	Refers to ILST. Helps others fill in forms	Uses other strategies like drawing analysis. Relies on verbal knowledge of learner due to time constraints

The findings in Table 5.1 were compiled from my observations recorded in the field notes and the teachers' responses to the following interview questions (see Appendix A):

- Could you explain the steps you take at your school when you have a learner with barriers to learning?
- Can you tell me how you go about assessing a learner in your classroom who is experiencing barriers to learning?

The teachers at Welcome Primary School used various methods of assessment to determine the learners' levels of achievement and their support needs. The traditional methods of tests, marks and schedules were particularly prevalent in the Intermediate Phase, while the Foundation Phase teachers used more informal approaches to assessment.

The observation book is a large hardcover book that every teacher is supposed to have in which interviews with parents, teachers or learners are recorded as well as other observations of events in the school or classroom. It is referred to as the "interview book" by Teacher IP5. Five of the teachers use this observation book to record their observations of the "problem learners". My own observation in the classrooms was that this book is used more often as a type of journal. Teacher FP2 wrote down what phonics and words she does on a daily basis with notes on some learners with problems. For most teachers, this book

was not seen as a useful tool for assessing learners, but this may be as a result of teachers not being accustomed to writing down observations. The Molteno Project co-ordinator found that the observation book was often a "beautiful book with little usable information, used more for window-dressing activities". She also found that the teachers did not know their learners individually (Molteno Project co-ordinator, pers. comm., August 2011).

When looking at the "types of testing methods" in the third column, there is a clear difference between the Intermediate and Foundation Phases as far as formal testing is concerned. Most of the Intermediate Phase teachers use formal testing and record their results in a mark book. In contrast, the Foundation Phase teachers seem to make more use of informal methods of assessment, often working with ability groups to gain insight into learners' levels of achievement. One teacher stresses continuous assessment in the Foundation Phase (FP5), while one Intermediate Phase teacher refers to using various forms of assessment (IP4).

Table 5.1 above shows that seven out of the eleven teachers refer learners with barriers to learning to the ILST (although this actually only refers to the ILST co-ordinator). It ties in with the findings discussed under Section 4.6 in the previous chapter. This does not, however, show to what level the process of referral is followed through and whether this referral results in support for the learner. The four teachers who do not refer learners to the ILST are all in management positions. This could be ascribed to a number of factors: firstly, the ILST co-ordinator is not a member of the management team and the school hierarchy system prevents these teachers from asking for advice from someone at a lower post level (refer to Section 4.6); secondly, it could be the already high administrative demands placed on the school's management team that prevents them from referring learners to the ILST coordinator; and, thirdly, it could be that the management team members do not understand the role of the ILST within the school (refer to Section 4.7).

The fifth column ("other forms of assessment") highlights the wide range of strategies employed by the teachers to assess learners in their classes. Two teachers, FP4 and FP6, spoke of the time constraints that prevented them from recording valuable information about a learner with barriers to learning. Both these teachers served on a number of committees in the school and were showing high levels of stress.

There is an increased awareness of using the learners' files and workbooks as evidence of their levels of ability (IP3, FP1, FP2, FP5). An interesting point, made by FP2 (p. 15), was that learners used to have only one book in which to write all their work. She found it helpful that there were different books for each task now. With the learners using separate books (i.e. one for phonics, one for maths, etc.), she found it easier to see the problems that the learners were encountering. The impression I got was that the use of a number of books was a relatively recent introduction. This is very different to what has been the practice in fee-paying schools. In addition, I noted that, in comparison to the amount of work my own special needs learners completed on a daily basis, the learners at the Welcome Primary School completed a lot less written work per day. This can have a negative effect on a learner's ability to consolidate a skill like writing, which needs consistent practice by a learner experiencing barriers to learning. There is, therefore, a considerable emphasis placed on oral work in classrooms without any formal assessment procedures in place for this. An interesting fact is that although the teachers may not have had written evidence of the barriers to learning, they could give good verbal accounts of the learners' barriers to learning (Field notes, 12 August 2011).

One interesting omission is the use of individual files for learners experiencing barriers to learning. No teacher created a separate file for the learners needing additional support. If I needed specific information on a learner I was assessing in grade 2, the teacher would page through her observation book to find places where she may have mentioned the learner or she would take out the learner's workbooks. The learner's books or worksheets were used as evidence of his/her ability to participate in the classroom. If the learner had severe barriers to learning, he/she may have been referred to the ILST co-ordinator, but the co-ordinator never showed me these files at the school. I only saw her SIAS files at the DBST meetings. This may, again, be because of her lack of time to complete forms.

5.4 Assessment using the Learner Profile

As discussed in Section 2.7.2.2 the Learner Profile is the document that every school should have for every learner – it is supposed to be a continuous record of a learner's progress and performance. It should list the interventions that have been undertaken to support a learner experiencing barriers to learning. The Learner Profile forms the first step of the SIAS

strategy, namely, the 'screening' section where learners in need of support are identified. It is regarded as a very important document and has to be treated with confidentiality. This document was discussed in Section 4.9 in the previous chapter. According to the *National Protocol for Assessment* (DBE, 2011, p. 31), the security of the Learner Profiles and the updating of all required information rests with the school management.

The Learner Profile, as set out in the *National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools in the General Education and Training Band* (DoE, 2007), was only introduced to the staff at Welcome Primary School during May 2011. The ILST co-ordinator handed the Learner Profiles out to the teachers at the meeting she had arranged with a representative of the DBST on 11 May 2011. The DBST representative stressed how important the Learner Profile was for the screening of the learners and for obtaining valuable information about a learner's progress and any interventions that had been done for him/her. He stressed that it also provided information about the learner's home circumstances.

Here is what the teachers had to say about the Learner Profile 6 to 8 weeks after they had received copies for their classes.

The Intermediate Phase teachers commented:

- IP1 (p. 5): "We had a Learner Profile which was not like this. Whenever a learner is admitted at the school, you've got this Learner Profile."….."They are there at my school, I am telling you the honest truth. They [the Learner Profiles] are not moving to another school."

- IP2 (p. 6): "I have not filled in those forms, because we were told that we will start from the lower grades upwards."

- IP3 (p. 2): "We only got this Learner Profile this year. We've not had it before."

- IP4 (p. 13): "Not the whole information [from the parents for the forms] is there yet."

The Foundation Phase teachers commented:

- FP1 (p. 6): "We were using the old form, but this year we are using the Learner Profile to get all the information about the learner and the parents."
- FP4 (p. 4): "Not just started…I used to use this."
- FP5 (p.13): "We did it. We are repeating it now."
- FP6 (p. 5): "I gave the forms to the teachers, but they didn't return them to me. …… but the HOD's…one time in the staffroom I ask them where are the forms and they say they are still filling them up. Some of the parents are not cooperating, because there is something in the files that's needed: a social grant number."

Half the teachers refer to an 'old' version of the Learner Profile, but do not elaborate on its effectiveness or even if it is used for referral purposes. The slow compliance with departmental requirements regarding the 'new' Learner Profile is hampered by teachers' lack of involvement, management's failure to secure completion of the forms and parents' reluctance to divulge information. At the time of this research I, therefore, found that the 'screening' part of the SIAS process (as discussed in Section 2.7.2.2) was being done through teachers' classroom observations and not from information gleaned from the Learner Profiles. The lack of recorded information on a learner's barriers to learning impacts negatively on the potential support that a learner could or should receive (see Section 5.3).

At the same ILST meeting with a member of the DBST, two additional 'recording tools' (a weekly report form on a learner's progress and a record of work/support form) were handed out and teachers were told to attach these forms to the Learner Profiles (Field Notes, 10 May 2011). At the time of the interviews 6 – 8 weeks later, none of the teachers mentioned these forms, but the principal mentioned that "everybody was excited" about the new forms and she hoped it would make things easier (IP5, p. 4). By the time I left the school at the end of 2011, I had never seen any of these forms being used by the teachers.

5.5 Assessment using the SIAS toolkit

The SIAS toolkit was discussed in detail in Section 2.7.2.3, where I described the toolkit as a book that follows the four stages of the SIAS strategy. At the Welcome Primary School, I never saw the toolkit in its book form, but only as photocopied pages of the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) Sections 1 and 2 (from DoE, 2008b). The level to which teachers engaged with the SIAS strategy was discussed in Section 4.4.2. The strategy *per se* was not something teachers engaged with to assess learners' barriers to learning, but, similar to their engagement with the Learner Profile, they preferred to use their observational skills of learners' abilities and then approached the ILST. The co-ordinator would then issue the photocopied forms from the SIAS strategy to be filled in, namely the SNA: Sections 1 and 2. If the teachers did not complete these forms adequately there was a negative impact on the support that a learner with barriers to learning could receive as the DBST could not recommend appropriate interventions and referred the learner back to the school (DBST meetings).

This stage in the assessment process involves the parents of the learner being interviewed and requires the teacher to complete the extended profile of the learner's needs. A teacher must, amongst others, assess the family situation and parents' understanding of their child, the actual barriers to learning and development as well as the contextual factors impacting on the learner at home and at school (DoE, 2008, pp.11-19). This form was seldom filled in by any of the local schools unless a member of the DBST assisted the school (DBST Meeting, 16 August 2011). Even the principal of the special needs school found the documents challenging to fill in and adapted the forms to obtain relevant information. She found that the information written on the SNA 1 and 2 forms (from DoE, 2008b) was not detailed enough to make any informed decisions around providing appropriate support to learners referred to the special needs school (Field Notes, 15 September 2011). This highlights the dilemma (as discussed in Section 2.6.2) that arises when policy is not designed by and with teachers who have to implement it, but rather by bureaucrats who lack understanding (Naiker, 2006, p. 2). At the Welcome Primary School teachers often preferred to ask the ILST coordinator to interact with the parents and to conduct the required interviews to complete the forms as they found this task to be too challenging (see table 4.4, FP6).

The school had established a system of referring learners to the psychologists at the local hospital for a more detailed assessment. The ILST encouraged teachers to interact with the parents of a learner requiring further assessment. This role was not solely the responsibility of the coordinator, but the referral process to a psychologist posed a challenge to the teachers. Parents often resisted the process as they often had preconceived conceptions of what a visit to a psychologist could mean. This concurs with the cultural beliefs discussed under section 2.6.3. There are strong emotions associated with the possibility of a child being labeled as disabled and some parents would go to extreme lengths to avoid their child being assessed by a psychologist as was demonstrated by the family that moved their child three times to avoid any assessment (Field Notes, 27 May 2011). The psychological or medical information should have been recorded on the Diagnostic Profile, a part of the SNA 1 document in the SIAS toolkit. However, psychologists at the local hospital were not using the form, preferring to use their own format of reporting by providing a psychological assessment on the hospital's form. In addition, the psychologists were very frustrated with the lack of helpful information provided by teachers. At the DBST meeting of October 2011, it was made very clear that, in order to make a proper professional diagnosis, detailed information from the teachers was essential. Too many teachers thought a letter consisting of just the briefest details was sufficient.

Once a psychologist's report was returned to the school, a further problem emerged. Teachers found it very difficult to understand the findings in the reports and were not able to use the information to complete the SIAS documents. This resulted in further delays in providing support to the learner. I became aware of this situation when I assisted a teacher (who was not one of the teachers that I interviewed) with the completion of the SIAS forms (Field Notes, 12 August 2011; also referred to in Section 4.6). This experience confirmed that training teachers 'in context' rather than using the 'cascade' method was more successful at Welcome Primary School (refer to Section 2.6.2).

5.6 Written reports in the assessment process

There is a need to write accurate, informative reports on any assessment done with a learner who requires high levels of support. The challenges encountered when writing reports was noted by teacher IP5, who stated, "I think we lack that skill of reporting" (IP5, p.

15). When I assisted a teacher to interpret her recorded assessments (refer to Section 5.5) and link these to a psychological report, I made the following notes:

> "It was interesting to note how the teacher was finding it difficult to write down the barriers [to learning] the learner was experiencing, although she could orally describe the learner and his challenges with ease. Connecting this oral knowledge with the SIAS forms is not easy, and as a result the written information is often insufficient to make an informed decision about the learner" (Field Notes, 12 August 2011).

It appears that the need to have written reports on learners experiencing barriers to learning is a 'new' requirement for these teachers. Teachers were requesting 'practical demonstrations' on how to complete the SIAS documents from the DBST at the November 2009 workshop (see Section 4.2). The move towards Inclusive Education has brought with it a number of new documents (including the SIAS strategy) that all require extensive written reports. If teachers are not familiar with this process of writing down assessments, usually not in their mother tongue either, they will encounter a number of challenges. A colleague at the special needs school found that writing reports in her mother tongue of isiXhosa was easier than expressing her assessments in English. She found oral reporting in English easier than English report writing. The Xhosa culture has a rich history of oral recordings – the stories are passed on orally from generation to generation. I, therefore, find that the question around oral reporting in certain cultures needs to be further investigated to assist policy makers.

From my interviews, I became more aware of this oral reporting phenomenon when teachers started to speak about their problems around the issue of retention. Retention is the process of deciding whether a learner proceeds to the next grade or stays in the same grade. In addition, I had assessed 18 Grade 2 learners at the school and submitted my findings to the principal. The reports I had written were accepted by the school and then it was stated that these reports would be used for the meeting with the school's circuit manager to discuss the progression of the learners. This meant that the teachers would themselves not write reports on these learners, but rather use the reports I had submitted to the school for the motivation of a learner's retention in his/her current grade.

The issue of retention needed a closer investigation to gain further insight into teachers' assessment methods, as these year-end assessments are needed to make decisions about learners who experience barriers to learning.

5.7 Retention of learners

Retention is the term used when a learner has to repeat a grade, i.e. he/she is retained in a grade. According to the *National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools in the General Education and Training Band* (DoE, 2007), it is stated under the section on progression in Grades R – 8:

- Ideally, all learners in Grades R – 8 should progress with their age cohort.
- Where a learner needs more time to demonstrate achievement, decisions shall be made based on the advice of the relevant role-players: teachers, learners, parents and education support services (ESS).
- No learner should stay in the same phase for longer than four years (or five years in the case of the Foundation Phase where Grade R is offered), unless the provincial Head of Department has given approval based on specific circumstances and professional advice (DoE, 2007, p. 20).

These guidelines show that a learner cannot be retained more than once per phase. In order to retain a learner, the teacher has to fill in a single form that states why the learner ought to be retained in a certain grade. This form must be signed by the parent and relevant evidence, such as the teacher's report, evidence of the learner's work, the school's intervention strategies and any other findings by professionals such as psychologists, occupational therapists and others, must be attached.

Once the forms have been completed, they have to be looked at by the school's assessment committee and the teacher involved may have to explain themselves to the committee if the committee had any doubts about the retention of the learner. This involves questioning and scrutiny of the teacher's work with the learner and, if the teacher cannot produce adequate proof of the learner's barriers to learning, or if the parent has not consented to this retention, then the learner simply moves on to the next grade without any intervention

or support strategy. This means the learner continues to more complex work in the next grade without having mastered the basics of the previous grade falling further and further behind his/her peers. Teacher FP2 stated the child would 'have no future' (see Table 5.2). The self-esteem of these learners is negatively affected and can lead to the learners dropping out of school (see Section 5.7.2).

If the forms are completed, they are then submitted to the district office of the Department of Basic Education and the school's circuit manager or education development officer (usually referred to as the EDO) who peruses them at the end of year progression schedule meetings. At a meeting with the Welcome Primary School staff in November 2011, the school's EDO stressed the importance of the retention forms and that they must be accompanied by adequate information at the promotion schedule discussion meeting. She stated at this meeting with the staff that Welcome Primary School was seen to be proactive in the area of providing good information and the EDO commended them for their work. This is interesting as, within the school, there is still a perception that not enough is being done for the children with learning disabilities by the district office, particularly amongst the Grade 1 and 2 teachers, who often feel their recommendations are ignored to the disadvantage of the learners. This was corroborated by the evidence I was able to collect when assessing the Grade 2 learners, which showed that nearly 20% of the learners in the 2011 Grade 2 classes were unable to read the first level Grade 1 readers. The ILST co-ordinator told me that there had been retention forms for most of these Grade 2 learners the previous year when they were in Grade 1, but that they had had to proceed nonetheless.

5.7.1 Retention at the Welcome Primary School

The retention strategy poses certain challenges at the Welcome Primary School. The teachers feel that there are a number of learners who are too young to cope with the work and, in addition, have a "big gap" (IP5, p. 12) when starting school as their home circumstances do not adequately prepare them for the learning process at school. With the lack of support from the DBST (who fall under the Education and Social Support Services-ESSS) and only one teacher with any remedial knowledge at Welcome Primary School, the retention process will be a difficult task in so far as the school does not have the capacity to

provide adequate support. Again, the inclusive education policy seems to be very progressive, but the implementation looks set to fail unless the Department of Basic Education is able to improve the support services it can provide to schools.

The teachers often expressed their concerns about retention and acknowledged their challenges around the process of retaining a learner. They understood the need to retain certain learners, but found the process of retention to be 'hard work', usually because of the need for a written assessment of the learner. A number of learners seem to have been identified as having barriers to learning through this retention process. The ILST coordinator was, however, finding that many learners were simply allowed to proceed, as the teachers found the retention process too arduous (Field Notes: 22 July 2011, p. 2) or the Department of Basic Education did not want to have to deal with too many retention forms even if the teachers had clearly stated their reasons for retention (FP6, p. 26).

5.7.2 Teachers' comments relating to retention

Seven of the eleven teachers interviewed mentioned the retention process. Five are Foundation Phase teachers and two are from the Intermediate Phase and these two are also on the school management team:

Table 5.2: Teachers' comments about retention

Teacher	Comment
FP1	When asked what she would do with her learners who have barriers to learning, she said: "Some of them, if they could be retained they would be better, but some of them I don't think I'll have them. They need a remedial teacher" …….. "If they don't accept to go to [the special school], I would retain them and try next year" (p. 11).
FP2	"For some it is important [to be retained], because they are young. …. I still need to teach him those basic things, but if he moves up he will have no future" (p. 12). And then she says: "It's hard work, that retention form. In the past we did not have that retention form…. We just said what the problem was. There is so much writing, and writing for this retention form" …….. "I don't like all that writing for that retention" …… "If you could just write what the problem is, the teacher would not mind" (p. 13).

FP4	"I have learners there who can't write a simple word correctly. I'm doing Grade 2. He can't write a Grade 1 word ……. He can't read a book." "…and when I go back to the teacher ….she said: I've got learners here whom I want them to repeat the grade, but according to the department they said [no], they must proceed to another grade." ….. "If they keep on saying they must be fast-tracked …. Then they will do that [not be able to read or write] (p. 14).
FP5	"Departmental policies do not allow us to keep these kids when you see that they are not ready. They do not allow us to keep them more than 4 years in Foundation Phase… that is now the age cohort. And then now teachers are interested to help the kids….to make them repeat the standard, or phase or grade, but because of that policy, they are not allowed. It means that they are frustrated sometimes…. knowing nothing and then you don't have anything to do because you must cooperate with the policy" (p. 3).
FP6	"Every year at the end…..the EDO comes down to our school and needs the observation books and the retention form. If you said in your retention form, I did this on this date, it must appear in your observation book" (p. 20). "Our assessment committee need to change some things ……. They are afraid for us to have so many retention forms. If you've got 34 kids in your class and twenty are passing and 12 will remain, they must accept that as it is. Because when we say that the kids are not ready, they are not" (p. 26).
IP1	" …so because of the policies of the department, the child can't repeat a phase twice or thrice… So the child goes after he has repeated that grade. So they should have learners who can't read there…" (p. 7). "…. This retention form. Everything that is here [referring to the SIAS document] is on that retention form. If you don't [write it down], you won't be able to answer all those questions there: what barriers, what is the intervention, what is the problem" (p. 18).
IP5	"I will say the problem lies with the retention form ….. it's not complicated. It's just that we don't write everything in that retention form, and then when the EDO is moderating she does not get the whole picture and the teachers are not available to explain the whole scenario of that child" (p. 14).

This table shows that the retention challenges are closely linked to assessment processes. Teachers need to engage in reporting, recording and support strategies to make informed decisions about learners' progression through the school system. From table 5.2 it can be seen that four teachers feel that the policy of not allowing learners to repeat more than

once in the Foundation Phase was a problem for learners requiring the consolidation of basic skills. FP5 mentions that, as this policy keeps a teacher from helping a learner to consolidate his/her knowledge, it can lead to frustration, but then also states that "you must co-operate with policy" (FP5, p. 3). FP4 described how difficult it was for a learner in Grade 2 when he could not even write one Grade 1 word, but had had to proceed to the next grade according to departmental rulings. She refers to this as "fast-tracking" a learner (FP4, p. 14). IP1 also stated that the policy of only repeating once per phase led to the fact that there would be learners in the higher grades who cannot read. This implies that this results in learners who require high levels of support needs in the higher grades (IP1, p. 7). FP2 referred indirectly to the policy when she said she felt that a child who progressed without a solid foundation "had no future" (FP2, p. 12). FP1 felt some learners "would be better" if she could retain them (FP1, p. 11). It was not clear to me how any of the teachers would actually manage to give a 'retained' learner additional support when I had observed large classes at Welcome Primary School with many learners experiencing barriers to learning in every class.

When looking at the comments in table 5.2 there seems to be 'a reluctance', or, perhaps, an inability to complete the required retention forms. FP2 said the forms were "hard work" and would have preferred to be able to simply state the problem, rather than fill in a complex form. IP5 states that not everything that is required in the retention form is written down. FP6 speaks of how the retention form must correlate with other observations that should have been written down. When reflecting on these statements, I again considered whether language may have something to do with the 'fear of forms' or the reluctance to complete forms (also refer to Section 3.13.3). A teacher may speak English fluently, but there are challenges when she is required to express pedagogical concepts on paper using her second language, especially after assessing a learner. This can result in non-compliance with policy and the retention process may be bringing this challenge to the fore. This seems to require further research as mentioned in Section 5.6.

In addition, FP1 and FP2 also expressed concerns about needing to retain learners that were too young, but also worried about retaining older learners as they often developed behaviour problems in the class (FP1, p.11; FP2, p. 12). These older learners were often

those with very high support needs who would not benefit from being retained. They required such specialist intervention that they would be unable to benefit from an ordinary public school environment and would need to be referred to a special school. This meant that the teachers had to complete the SIAS documents for such learners to ensure continued schooling and to avoid that the learner drops out of the school system. It is reported by UNESCO that many learners with these challenges drop out of school because of "negative learning experiences and a history of having to repeat years because of poor performance" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 11).

The concerns teachers expressed around the age of the learners made me aware that there are issues pertaining to age within the retention process that need further discussion.

5.7.3 Retention and the issue of learner age

Often, the question of retention was raised in the interviews when a learner is considered very young for his/her grade. At the Welcome Primary School, the principal informed me that the revised policy of allowing children to start Grade R when they are aged four and a half years was both positive and negative: positive in the sense that the child could begin the process of learning in a more stimulating environment than the home, but negative in the sense that many children are not ready for schooling at that age. This means that there will be a number of children who are five and a half years old at the start of their Grade 1 year. A number of Foundation Phase teachers stressed the problem that many of the learners were not developmentally mature enough to begin to learn, particularly in Grade 1:

- FP3, p. 9: "..you cannot force the maturity";
- FP2, p. 12: "..he's still young and can't do the work";
- FP6, p. 26: "..kids are still young at that time…they need readiness programmes at that time".

This correlates with my personal experience in specialized education, where, for example, pencil grip, language skills, concentration and visual motor integration are often not well developed in learners that come from socio-economically challenged homes. The lack of adequate nutrition and, very often, the mother's abuse of alcohol during and after pregnancy were often mentioned during the DBST Placement meetings as well as in the

interviews. These factors can lead to slow development and the need for consolidation (DBST minutes of 2010 and 2011). With very young learners (in chronological as well as mental age), retention in the Foundation Phase seems to become paramount to give the learners a chance to adequately develop those skills that will allow them to be able to read before starting Grade 2. Being retained twice at the lowest level was seen as positive by the teachers, but there are challenges, particularly regarding the parents.

5.7.4 Parents' attitude towards retention

Parents often did not accept the need for their child to repeat a grade, adopting delaying tactics (FP6, p. 12) or claiming that they were only made aware of their child's problem at a higher grade (IP1, p. 8), or because "of discrimination in society" as their child would be seen as a failure or laughed at (IP5, p. 15). Again this concurs with the cultural belief systems discussed under Section 2.6.3 that could hamper the implementation of an inclusive education policy.

Besides the pressures perceived within society, the financial implications of Grade R education play a significant role. As discussed under Section 2.6.4, it is very difficult for no-fee-paying schools to raise funds to implement support programmes for learners. Parents do not want to pay for their children's Grade R education. At the pre-school level in this district, parents of even the poorest children within the Welcome Primary School environment are required to pay monthly fees, as the government does not provide free education or educator posts at Early Childhood Development (ECD) level (IP5, p.13). In fact, these teachers are referred to as practitioners and not educators, are seen to have less training (ibid.) and are, therefore, paid less. At Welcome Primary School, the parents were required to pay for Grade R and then the school's SGB paid the two practitioners from these funds. From Grade 1 onwards, the school was a no-fee-paying school. This had a considerable impact on the retention process, as parents wanted to "get rid of [or] run away from the money" issue (IP5, p. 24). The parents were seen to be more willing for their children to be retained in a no-fee-paying grade rather than at the Grade R level where consolidation would have the highest possible outcome for a learner. These findings are summarized by the following statement made by IP5:

> "So I would say that gap from home and the gap from the practitioners [the Grade R teachers], that they are sort of not competent enough and then the age as well, because the admission age has been lowered by the department and you daren't say: 'no, this isn't good for you'. They [the parents] will take their children to somewhere else where they will not be told about that. They want their children to go to school to get rid of them, so that they are free. Take them to pre-school, take them to school. And pre-school …..they don't want to pay. They don't like children repeating pre-school, because they have to pay R50, R100 in these pre-schools…" (IP5, p. 12).

Another factor impacting on the Grade R learners' assessments and possible retention, was the fact that some parents kept their children at home during very cold winters, which meant that these learners would not have completed the Grade R programme, resulting in the learners not being school-ready for Grade 1. This 'gap' then puts such a learner at a further disadvantage (IP5, p. 13).

5.8 Summary of the findings

This chapter has described and analysed teachers' practices in assessing barriers to learning and some of the problems and difficulties they are experiencing. To do this, I looked at the Welcome Primary School teachers' assessment procedures and methods. There were differences between the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase approaches to assessment. The Foundation Phase teachers were more likely to refer learners to their ILST coordinator, but were not able to complete the required forms on their own. The management of the school was not really involved in the SIAS assessment process. Documents like the Learner Profile and the SIAS toolkit were incomplete and, in addition, it emerged that teachers struggled with the forms required for the retention of a learner in a grade. The retention issue also pointed to challenges around the age of learners and their school-readiness as well as to parental commitment to a good Grade R foundation.

The local DBST was not perceived to be supportive in the assessment process, leaving the SIAS strategy only at the second stage (Section 4.8). All these factors point to insufficient and inappropriate support for learners experiencing barriers to learning. This chapter

showed that teachers needed effective and context appropriate training to carry out the complex assessments required by an inclusive education system that is hoping to move away from the medical deficit model of disability (refer to section 2.3.1) and become a social model that is truly supportive of those learners requiring various levels of support. With the only professional assessment in the process at this stage being the psychological one, this district is still firmly supporting a medical model of disability which is apparent from the DBST placement meetings. Learners are admitted to the local special school on medical evidence rather than on detailed support needs documentation.

While conducting the data analysis around policy and assessment, a number of additional factors emerged at the Welcome Primary School. These had a direct impact on the implementation of inclusive education policy and on the teachers' assessments of barriers to learning. These emerging factors will be discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6:

EMERGING FACTORS

6.1 Introduction

The third research goal for this study is to describe and analyse emergent factors that impact on policy implementation. The research data analysis in Chapter 5 showed how teachers assessed learners' barriers to learning. Alongside these findings, it emerged that most of the barriers to learning that required high levels of support are perceived to originate from extrinsic causes like poverty, alcohol abuse, family relationships and family structures (IP5, p. 8; IP3, p.10). I found that these additional factors that emerged have an impact on the process of assessment at the Welcome Primary School and could, therefore, influence the roll-out and implementation of the *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support* (SIAS strategy) and *Education White Paper 6* (EWP6). In the context of Welcome Primary School, I began to question whether policy implementation could be more realistic if these extrinsic factors are taken into consideration when advising the teachers and parents at the school. Extrinsic barriers to learning affect the whole teaching and learning process and can cause intrinsic barriers to learning within the learners at risk.

6.2 Emerging factors affecting barriers to learning at the Welcome Primary School

The emerging factors were mentioned most often in response to the following interview questions around barriers to learning (see Appendix A):

- What do you think causes barriers to learning?
- What kinds of barriers to learning have you encountered?

Teachers reported on a number of factors outside the school that were having an impact on their learners and on the assessment process. It was noted that the teachers said very little about their own or the school's role in creating or being a barrier to learning. The teachers

were also more likely to see the learners' difficulties arising out of these extrinsic causes than to assess the learners' intrinsic barriers such as visual and auditory delays, developmental delays or behavioural challenges. They did recognize the more general concepts of physical disabiliy, mental disability and health issues as intrinsic barriers to learning which could be ascribed to a lack of knowledge of more detailed terminology about barriers to learning. The following table lists the factors that were most often referred to by the teachers:

Table 6.1: Extrinsic/Intrinsic factors affecting learners and the assessment process

	FP1	FP2	FP3	FP4	FP5	FP6	IP1	IP2	IP3	IP4	IP5	
Abuse of alcohol by parents/caregivers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Abuse of the child grant	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	8
Physical or mental disability (health)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Not living with the biological parents	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9
Negative attitude to the special needs school	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10

The emerging factors seem, at first, to have little bearing on the SIAS strategy, but as the data from the interviews together with the DBST minutes and the Field Notes was analysed, the relevance of these factors came to the fore.

6.3 Analysis of the emerging factors affecting learners and the assessment process

The factors cited in Table 6.1 are based on the data generated in the interviews that were conducted with the teachers. Poverty appears to be the underlying factor for most of the barriers to learning encountered in this research but, as it is so pervasive in the school, it was not always directly mentioned. This concurs with the UNESCO finding that stated that

“poverty and marginalization are the major causes of exclusion in most parts of the world” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 5). A point made by the Circuit Manager at the meeting in November 2011 (pers. comm. 2011) struck me as significant:

> ”An elderly grandmother who is struggling to put a piece of bread on the table, will not be too concerned about her grandchild’s reading homework.”

This research and my experience at the special needs school show that societal barriers (such as poverty, sexual abuse, violence, lack of infrastructure) are so prevalent amongst the majority of the learners at Welcome Primary School that the teachers have little room to develop strategies to support learners on an individual basis. This may explain why the teachers do not engage in a deeper analysis of the intrinsic barriers to learning when the survival issues in the lives of the learners are so critical. An interesting word often mentioned during the interviews, particularly in connection with the abuse of alcohol and the child grant, is “carelessness” (FP4, p. 15). The parents are seen as being “careless” (in this context meaning ‘not caring’), when it comes to the upbringing of their children, or, according to one of the teachers: “….careless for their welfare” (FP3, p. 14). This, again, pointed to the role of language in research and the fact that I had to be wary of making any assumptions until I understood how a particular word was used (see 3.13.4). To understand the emerging factors a little better, each one of the factors in Table 6.1 is analysed in more detail.

6.4 The abuse of alcohol

Every participant in this research referred to alcohol as a factor that had some influence on the learners and seemed to contribute to the barriers to learning that learners were experiencing. Firstly, it is referred to in the context of the mother drinking alcohol during her pregnancy and that this had an adverse effect on the learner’s cognitive development. Some teachers had learned from the psychologist’s reports that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) could be what was affecting some of their slow learners (FP1, p.8; IP5, p. 8)). Others saw alcohol abuse resulting in the learners being undernourished, neglected or physically and verbally abused as well as leading to learner absenteeism (FP4, p.15). These conditions then lead to the learner not being able to learn at school.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is characterised by specific facial features, stunted growth and smaller head size, intellectual disability as well as behavioural challenges (Riley & McGee, 2008, p. 358). FAS falls under the umbrella term Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which is used "to categorise the range of effects an individual may have as a result of maternal alcohol use" (Rendall-Mkosi, London, Adnams, Morojele, McLoughlin & Goldstone, 2008, p. 7). This research in South Africa places the prevalence of FASD as ranging from 2,7% to 11,9% in different areas. It is the highest prevalence of FAS in the world. Studies done by May et al. (as cited in Rendall-Mkosi et al., 2008, pp. 14-15) found a prevalence of up to 119/1000 live births in one South African community, in comparison to the estimated average for the developed world of 0.97/1000 live births (with 8/1000 in high risk American Indian communities). These statistics are alarming. No study of this disorder seems to have been done in the Eastern Cape yet, but the fact that all the teachers participating in this research voiced their concerns about alcohol abuse could point to possible undiagnosed FASD playing a role in the number of learners identified as needing high support needs at Welcome Primary School.

6.4.1 Prevalence of alcohol abuse amongst referrals to the DBST

When analysing the DBST minutes of placement meetings from 2009 to 2011 and looking at admissions to the special school over this period, it shows that about 30% of applicants reviewed for admission state "maternal alcohol abuse" as a possible cause for the child's difficulties.

TABLE 6.2: Learners with possible FASD

Year of DBST meeting	No of learners reviewed	No of learners with alcohol abuse cited in the information provided by the DBST
2009	10	4
2010	21	7
2011	16	4

This means that 15 out of the 47 reviewed learners over the three year period could be affected by FASD. It also means that 31.9% of learners with high support needs in the research area have these support needs because of a 100% preventable condition.

6.4.2 The implications of alcohol abuse on the Inclusive Education policy

The high incidence of FASD in this research district could indicate that South Africa, on the whole, is facing a serious crisis. The implications of FASD are considerable for the economic development of South Africa and will affect the budgets of the Inclusive Education Directorates in each province. In America, it was estimated, in 2002, that it would cost the state around $2 million for each individual with FAS (Riley & McGee, 2005, p. 359). This amount included medical costs, education and loss of productivity. If, over a three year period, a small town in the Eastern Cape has assessed 15 possible FAS learners and one uses a conservative estimate of R1 million per person, then it could be said that the state would have to find R15 million to support these individuals. Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome fall under the Inclusive Education division of education and, if one looks at the 2012 budget allocated for learners in the category for severely mentally disabled learners, a total of R9700 per learner was allocated per annum for such learners (Special needs school Paper Budget 2012/2013, Appendix C). It must be noted that the final allocation to a special needs school is usually a percentage of the paper budget which was approximately 64% during 2012 to the local special needs school (See Appendix C). This places the annual allocation per learner in this category at R6208. This is still significantly higher than the allocation for learners in ordinary public schools, which is about R800 per learner in 2012 (principal of Welcome Primary, personal communication). This means that a learner with FASD costs the state 8 times more to educate than a normal learner (refer to Section 2.6.4). It must be remembered that this does not include the care dependency grant of R1200 per month (or R24 000 per annum) that a severely mentally disabled child receives from the Department of Social Development. If the estimated cost to the state, identified in Riley and McGee (2005, p. 359), were to be applied in a local context, then, the 15 affected learners could cost the state R145 500 per annum in a special needs school as opposed to R12 000 per annum in an ordinary public school. It must be remembered that this data is in one education district alone.

The question, therefore, must be asked: where will all the FASD learners be accommodated in the education system of South Africa? They require the highest levels of support in the school system, but there are limited places in the special needs schools. Ordinary public schools must accommodate these learners in an inclusive education framework, but are not supported financially to do so. Further, they are unable to perform academic tasks that are tested in the mainstream schools and this will contribute to the low marks achieved in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) that ordinary schools have to perform each year.

6.4.3 Implications of alcohol abuse for the SIAS strategy

Most literature advocates early intervention for learners with FASD to improve their educational and living potential. Children with FASD should be screened and identified using the SIAS strategy as early as possible. Riley & McGee (2005, p. 363) state that "early identification leads to interventions, services, and improved outcomes." Here, in South Africa, Rendall-Mkosi et al. (2008, p. 15) state the following:

> "Screening for and diagnosing FASD as early as possible after one year of age increases the possibilities that a child with FASD will receive appropriate care and stimulation to minimize developmental delays and that the mother will be supported so that she does not have another alcohol affected child."

This South African study also points out the challenges facing learners with FASD. It mentions that these learners are unsupported in the mainstream schools and, as a result, are likely to drop out of school and then become vulnerable to drug abuse, crime and teenage pregnancy (Rendall-Mkosi et al., p. 58). Similarly, Riley and McGee (2005, p.362) report that these learners are at high risk for problem behaviour such as being hyperactive, disruptive, impulsive or delinquent and that they have significant social deficits. The special needs school in the area of this research study has encountered all these challenges in learners with FASD and can agree with the studies that have been done. In the case of the Welcome Primary school, the identification of the learners with FASD has been relatively late for the learners, as the problem is only addressed once the learner has been assessed by a psychologist, usually after failing to achieve the basic outcomes in the Foundation Phase.

6.4.4 Teachers' comments on the abuse of alcohol

The following comments taken from the interviews show that the teachers, who were participating in this study, often expressed their concerns for those learners whose mothers (or both parents) were drinking alcohol:

Table 6.3: Teachers' comments on alcohol abuse by parents/caregivers

Teacher	Comment
FP1 p. 12	"No one is going to help his or her child because he or she is busy drinking there in tavern [sic]".
FP2, p. 9	"….her mother was drinking too much when she was young, and even when she was pregnant."
FP4 p. 15:	"They drink a lot, then they fight and then there is no one to look after the kids."
FP5 p. 15:	"….his mother is alive, but drinking……she is all over the place…"
FP6 p. 14:	"…..her mum was drunk too much, when she was carrying the child [pregnant]."
IP1 p. 13	"The parents are sending these children there to buy…..then they become drunk in front of the children. The children steal the alcohol, they drink it and then they are used to it."
IP2 p. 9:	"You will see, if you call a parent to our school…….at 8 o'clock you will see she is already drunk."
IP3 p. 10:	"…….most of our slow learners are the ones where the parents are drinking."
IP5 p. 8:	"And normally they won't divulge that they were abusing alcohol, you know, and you sort of read in between the lines that when you look at the child and you look at the report and you see this is alcoholic syndrome, this one."

These statements, therefore, point to the serious effects that alcohol abuse can have on learners and their families. At Welcome Primary School, the evidence suggests that the alcohol related problems have an impact on the learners' ability to learn. In addition, the teachers did not have the knowledge or training to deal with the challenges that these

learners face. The underlying learning disabilities and high risk factors (see Section 6.4.3) cannot be addressed in a school with limited resources. Learners with FAS need intensive support programmes and teachers who have extensive training and experience to lessen the impact of this significant disability.

The Welcome Primary School was enthusiastic about an innovation by the DBE's Education and Social Support Services (ESSS), which was the introduction of the Learner Support Agent (LSA) (Field Notes, DBST meeting 16 August 2011). This person is able to monitor the families for alcohol abuse and is responsible for identifying vulnerable and sick learners and is then supposed to provide support for them in the form of monitoring, medication and alerting the relevant social workers to any problems. This project began in April 2011 and was, by the end of the research period, partially successful. The challenge was that the LSA was responsible for two schools and just over 1000 learners. This means that the support was again only for a few learners as the LSA could not manage such numbers:

> "…and they expect them [the LSA] to record each and every learner in a school and then visit the cases they see…….. and it's a lot, because the bulk of our learners have problems" (IP5, p. 20).

At the special needs school where I work, the LSA attached to the school was regularly working on cases that involved alcohol abuse and these cases needed maximum interventions from the school, the Department of Health, the Department of Social Services and Child Welfare. In addition both the LSAs at Welcome Primary School and the special needs school found that they were also monitoring the use of the child support grant that parents could receive for their children.

6.5 The child support grant

During the period of this research, 2009 – 2012, the Department of Social Development paid out a child grant of R250 - R270 per month to every mother or guardian of a child, if they had a child under the age of 18 and if there is no other form of income in the family. This grant is intended to subsidise the child's needs like food and clothing. During my research, it became apparent from eight of the teachers' responses (see table 6.1, row 2) that the grant was often the cause for some concern. From the data it seems that children are, at

times, deliberately conceived so that the mother will be able to receive the child support grant (FP6, p. 14; FP2, p.14). These children are frequently left in the care of their grandparents, but the grant is not paid to the grandparents, instead it is kept by the young mothers for their own purposes while living in a different home.

The teachers made the following comments about how the parents use the grants every month:

Table 6.4: Teachers' comments on child support grants

Teacher	Comment
IP2, p. 10:	"…their monies are eaten by the mother's boyfriend. …..I ask: aren't you getting the grant, and [the learner] answers: yes, but she is paying the skoppers [money lenders] the money."
FP6, p. 14:	"…when they've [the mothers] got the social grant, they will use the money for their stuff and not for the kids."
IP5, p. 9:	"…they use money for alcohol, they buy phones, they do their hair, they buy clothes. When you call the parent, she is smart and the child is scrappy [sic]. ……They get the R250 for the children's grant. That's the only right they know. They may not know the other things, but they know that when you gave birth to a child, you must get this grant. They know the channels."
FP3, p. 15:	"They drink liquor, sometimes buying their clothes; doing their needs but not for the children's needs."
FP1, p. 17:	"…Some use it [the grant] for school uniforms, some use it for drugs….."

This seems to link the issuing of the child grant to the possible abuse of the children. The young mothers are seen to be using the money for themselves rather than for the children, resulting in neglect, physical and verbal abuse and inadequate nutrition for the children. Many of these children are amongst the ones perceived to have difficulties with learning. The school nutrition programme helps to alleviate the nutrition aspect, but these mothers do not support their children at home with a loving environment and assistance with homework. It seems that, quite often, the young mother lives her own life somewhere else

and has left the children with the grandmother, who is often not well. There is also an added burden of health issues for the families, often where the young mothers abandon the young child with disabilities (FP5, p. 15).

6.6 Disability and health issues as barriers to learning

Some teachers referred to the fact that a few learners had physical disabilities that were barriers to learning, but that the school did not have many of these learners. Teachers spoke of the learners who had been helped to obtain spectacles (FP6, FP2) and some mentioned hearing difficulties (IP3). There is currently one child with a physical disability (FP6) and one that had been at the school a few years before (IP5), but, generally, it was felt that the school was not equipped to deal with children with severe physical disabilities or with severe health issues. One teacher felt quite strongly about having to teach a child with a very infectious disease, tubercolosis (TB), as some of the teachers had become infected themselves (FP5, p. 7).

Teachers FP6, IP1, and FP1 all stated that physical disabilities were more likely to be dealt with at Welcome Primary School rather than mental disabilities. It emerged that teachers would be able to be more inclusive towards a child with a physical disability than with one that was severely mentally challenged as such a child was more likely to be dealt with negatively by the community and the school (refer to Section 2.6.3). FP3 spoke of a learner staying at home with schizophrenia rather than attending school as children seemed to avoid him and he had no friends (FP3, p. 3). This ties in with Ntombela's (2011, p. 13) view that teachers would rather see the "untypical learner" taught at a special school than at an ordinary school.

The fact that HIV/AIDS was mostly indirectly referred to may be indicative of the fact that these teachers do not talk about this condition easily. FP5, IP4 and IP5 referred to a learner who had AIDS and the drug resistant strain of TB and had passed away. One teacher explained that it was always easier to talk about illness or disability, if it did not directly affect a person or the immediate family, "…. because it is easy for people to say this one….the brother's child….this one is positive, HIV positive….[but] she won't tell people that his or her own is positive." (FP4, p. 10).

Some of the health issues were related to the parents' own health conditions and it was felt that the parents' health had an impact on a learner's ability to cope at school (FP2, p. 7). IP3 reported about a learner's mother who was a diabetic with hearing difficulties and how she felt this may be the reason why the learner could not hear and was neglected at home (IP3, p. 12). Similarly, FP5 reported about a learner whose mother had been in the TB hospital for a long time and was unable to accept that her child had learning difficulties (FP5, p. 14). These issues with the parents' health link to parental involvement with the school.

6.7 Parental involvement at the Welcome Primary School

Nine of the eleven teachers cited the fact that, if children do not live with their biological parents, it causes barriers to learning and lack of progress at school (Table 6.1, Row 4). This problem then links to the requirements of the SIAS strategy that advocates strong parent and learner involvement in the process of assessment and acknowledges parents as role-players in the implementation of Inclusive Education (refer to Sections 2.7.1 and 4.8). If a child is not living with his or her biological parents, it appears that support for the child is often lacking, with the caregivers not willing to, or unable to, become involved with the school's assessment processes.

For a thorough assessment of a learner's support needs, teachers need to involve the parents of a learner to gain insight into the learner's needs by obtaining background information about the learner's family, home situation and parent/caregiver's understanding of the child (DoE, 2008, p. 12). The SIAS strategy states that "[parent]/caregiver participation in the SIAS process is not a matter of choice, but compulsory" (DoE, 2008a, p. 96). But, at the same time, the SIAS strategy document acknowledges that, generally, there is a lack of involvement of teachers, parents and learners in the assessment process (DoE, 2008a, p. 2). Some of these 'parental' challenges were discussed in Section 2.7.1 and from the research it could be seen that these problems pose a challenge to teachers who have difficulty communicating with the families of their learners, especially when the learner is not living with his/her biological parents. Out of this data, the question arose as to who actually cares for the children.

6.7.1 Family relationships

Throughout this research the teachers spoke about the caregivers of the learners. Children do not automatically live with their biological parents and this meant that the person with whom the child lived, was seen to affect the learner's levels of achievement at school. Those children experiencing difficulties at school are often children from homes where there is a single mother, or only a grandmother, or they are being cared for by a relative like an aunt or sister. It was unusual to find that a child lived with both biological parents. From this research, it appears that the teachers perceive the learners to be affected by their family relationships. Quite a number of teachers refer to the fact that the children are not living with their biological mothers, but with elderly grandparents or other relatives. The following table of comments helps to illustrate this point:

Table 6.5: Teachers' comments about family relationships

Teacher	Comment
FP5, p. 5	"You will find out that most of our kids don't live with their biological parents and you can see that for that grandmother, it is not easy for her to look after the kids of her sons, her daughters… she's old now."
FP6, pp. 14-15	"With our culture, the grandparents will just look after the kids… And she is not living with the child. The child is living with the grandparents."
FP1, p. 6	"Most of our learners are not staying with their mothers, they are staying with their grandfather, grandmother and so on."
FP2, p. 7	"She [mother] is right around [town]….but I don't know where she is …so the children are staying with grandparents, or cousins, or aunts…"
IP1, p. 11	"The parent does not stay with the child. The child is staying with somebody, but the parents are alive."
IP5, p. 9	"No, you will find that this parent does not live with the child. It's the mother, the grandmother, the aunts who are actually taking care of the child. …. They don't live in the same household."

Generally, the fact that children do not necessarily live with their biological parents seems to be accepted from a cultural perspective (FP6, p.14), but the teachers found that a guardian who had no biological connection to a child was less inclined to cooperate with the school.

6.7.2 Parental co-operation with the school

When teachers discussed parental/caregiver co-operation with the school, teachers expressed various points of view ranging from comments about supportive parents to unco-operative parents. It seems that there is a range of support. One teacher stated "[we] do have parents who come to school and their children no problems [sic]" (FP3, p. 17), which contrasts with "…the ones we want, don't come because they are drunk" (FP4, p. 15) and "some of the parents are not cooperating" (FP6, p. 6). The co-ordinator of the Molteno reading project (which is being implemented at the school) spoke of improving parental involvement "sometimes for the first time" (Field Notes, 20 August 2011) and another teacher affirmed "we are including parents more now (FP3, p.5).

6.7.3 Teachers' interaction with parents

During the research period, I found that teachers have varying levels of interaction with the parents. For most cases where they were dealing with the assessment of learners requiring higher levels of support, they did try to involve the parents in the process, as can be seen from the comments "…you will advise the parent" (IP2, p. 3) and "…you discuss with the parent" (IP3, p. 3). However, very often this would not be sustained as the parents would not return after the initial contact (IP3, FP6).

Some teachers even expressed their fear of the parents as they had been threatened by them and, as a result, no longer undertook home visits:

- "Because now we are afraid to visit – …. we used to go – Mrs. X and I, we used to go, but not now" (FP6, p. 16).

- When asked if participant FP3 did home visits, she replied: "Yes, sometimes, in other homes, because we are afraid of the parents. Sometimes our parents are very [threatening]…..more especially in that area we are teaching at" (FP3, p. 17).

There are often challenges when a teacher has to inform a parent that their child has a problem at school, particularly if the child is seen as different or slow. The teachers spoke of the parents' lack of understanding and confusion, and one stated that some of the parents were very confused: "They don't know how to handle the situation and what will happen at home" (FP6, p. 10). One teacher referred to the competition amongst the parents, which makes it difficult to communicate information, and commented that the parents don't want their children to repeat a grade, because of the discrimination within the society and that "the friends are going to laugh at my child if he's repeating….there's too much competition amongst the parents" (IP5, p. 15).

There also seems to be a great deal of sensitivity around being seen as "not normal" or not fitting into the general perception of what a person or a learner should be like within a cultural context (also refer to Section 2.6.3). The ILST coordinator at Welcome Primary School reported that some parents were so afraid of their child being diagnosed as intellectually disabled that they removed their child from the school and enrolled him in another school without informing the school (Field Notes, 18 February 2011 and 27 May 2011). This means that no information on the learner is shared between teachers at the different schools and each school will start the process of assessment from the beginning. As soon as the next school calls the family for a discussion, the child is again moved to another school. This has serious implications for the learner's education, especially if they require moderate to high levels of support, as the process from identification to support is a lengthy one at this stage.

6.7.4 Overview of parental issues and their effects on the implementation of the SIAS strategy

The family's acceptance of a learner with support needs seems to impact on the completion of documents for the purpose of assessment. Those caregivers who are not biological family of the learner often do not feel compelled to assist the child, in contrast to the few parents who were becoming involved. In the case of the Welcome Primary School, the depressed socio-economic environment in which the school is situated contributes to a poor parent/school partnership. I generally found that the relationship between teachers and parents was not a relaxed one – there is wariness on both sides and this made consultation

with parents a challenge (Field Notes, 25 September 2011). Parents are often called to the school to discuss their child's progress, but fail to attend such meetings, or they come with an aggressive attitude as reported by FP3: "… they can beat you up". This does not create an atmosphere conducive to teamwork and there is hesitation by both parties to engage with one another.

Cultural realities may also contribute to the lack of engagement as it is seen to be difficult to be the bearer of "bad news" in some cultures (refer to Section 2.6.3). This links to the parents' educational background, which also plays a role in the level of involvement with the school. Many parents have feelings of inferiority as they may have dropped out of the education system before completing their full schooling careers. Motala (2011, p.36) argues that in South Africa there is an eagerness to learn but that the quality of education that is being delivered is not of a high standard. Motala (ibid.) found that the high unemployment rate in the country with youth unemployment particularly high, results in the perception that there are few economic rewards for staying at school beyond grade nine. Once these 'drop-outs' then become parents, a whole new set of challenges arises when addressing the learner's support needs with such parents.

In addition, there are negative perceptions amongst parents and their communities regarding special needs schools as well as towards being assessed by a psychologist at the local psychiatric hospital. This perception can prevent inclusive education being implemented as parents have been known to keep their children out of school rather than be associated with something that is considered 'insane' by the community. There is, however, evidence that some parents at the Welcome Primary School are relieved that their child's barriers to learning have been identified and supported (ILST meeting, November 2010). Once the family has visited the special needs school, their perception changes towards the school and there is a realisation that there are possibilities for their child's future. Nonetheless, there are parents who cannot accept the DBST's recommendations and prefer for their child to be retained in the mainstream school.

If a learner has been assessed to have high levels of support needs and is retained in a mainstream school because of parental preference, then this information should be entered into the school's EMIS documents. Learners with high levels of support needs are weighted

differently (refer to Section 2.6.4)and, if there are a significant number of such learners who have been assessed by a health professional to have these high support needs, then the school's post provisioning should provide extra staff to deal with these needs. There are indications in some provinces that the Department of Basic Education may employ remedial educators to deal with this challenge within the next few years but this will have a serious impact on the financial aspects of inclusive policy implementation.

This being a long term solution, with no immediate assistance to families with learners with serious barriers to learning in the ordinary public schools in the district, the parents need to come to terms with their attitude towards the special needs school to access support for their child.

6.8 Attitudes towards the special needs school

Interesting data emerged regarding attitudes towards the special needs school and psychological assessments. As the research was carried out over a four year period, an understanding of the assessments needed to complete documents for referral procedures began to emerge. Perceptions within the community and amongst teachers regarding special needs education in the district as well as psychological assessments were, at times, linked to cultural issues (refer to Section 2.6.3). This could play a significant role in the assessment process.

Although the special needs school has existed in the town for 20 years, perceptions of what actually takes place at the school are very varied. Some perceptions are quite negative and have an impact on the assessment process for those learners who do require high levels of support needs at the Welcome Primary School. The name of the special needs school has become associated with being "disabled, or unable to do things, or mad" (IP2, p.1). Another teacher expressed it as "if you go to [the special needs school], you are also not fine upstairs" (IP4, p.9). The fact that discrimination exists in the school community is expressed by one teacher as "there is too much discrimination outside" (IP5, p. 6) and this makes the assessment process a challenge for the school's ILST.

Other teachers speak of the "nasty" names or that a special needs school is seen as a "bad school" or has been "bad-labelled" within the town (IP3, FP4 and FP6), which leads to

parents being unwilling for their children to be assessed for support needs. Six teachers made these comments about special needs schools:

- "That is why parents fight when it comes to me telling them I am taking your child to [the special school]…even not to be a scholar there… just for the assessment. Wow! A parent can beat you, can fight you" (FP4, p. 6).

- "There's this term that says when someone has a problem, they say he's a '[using the name of the special needs school]'. Those terms. That's why when we find out… when the child has to go to [the special needs school], then the parent…… doesn't want to allow her child to go to [the special needs school]. It's because of those nasty names that our community gives" (IP3, p. 5).

- "….. the parent will be worried what the neighbour would say if his child has to go to [the special needs school]" (IP3, p. 9).

- If the child is referred to the special needs school then "….. they [the parents] don't know how to handle the situation and what will happen at home. …… So they want to protect their kids from going to special schools" (FP6, p.10).

- "…. the parents in the community…..they will be a laughing stock, their children will be a laughing stock in the neighbourhood" (IP5, p. 6).

- "So they don't want to…..what can I say…..they don't want to send them to those schools, those special schools (FP1, p. 2).

- "I think other parents didn't like their children to go to [the special needs school] because…..they took [the special needs school] to be a place for children that are not well" (FP3, p. 18).

These comments reflect the strong emotional reactions and suspicion that exist within the Welcome Primary School community regarding special needs education. The comments help with the understanding of the resistance towards the assessment process that could label their child as having special needs. Some teachers felt that parents needed to be educated about special needs and there was a feeling that 'educated people' would be able

to understand the role of the special needs school (FP4, FP5). This was confirmed by the response to the information session at the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting (Field Notes, 23 February 2011). Parents felt more positive after the meeting about discussing their children's challenges (FP6). By 2011, some parents were able to support their children when they were enrolled at the special needs school and it was felt that they "understood" the process (IP3, p. 5).

The special needs school has experienced the same reactions from parents. In some cases, the transition from mainstream schooling to special needs education is an easy process, while, in other cases, the parent's resistance is a significant challenge for the school. This resistance can, to a large extent, be ascribed to the lack of advocacy from the Department of Basic Education around Inclusive Education. Parents are not aware that the special needs school is part of one inclusive schooling system and not a place or institution on its own.

Towards the latter half of 2011 there were some positive perceptions amongst the teachers regarding the special needs school. This can to some degree be ascribed to the intervention projects conducted at the Welcome Primary School by staff members of the special needs school. The occupational therapist began the process in 2009 and I continued to interact with the school during 2010/2011. This led to one teacher stating, "….it's only now that I know about it [the special school]" (FP5, p. 11). Other teachers felt that learners at the special needs school were gaining skills and that learners experiencing barriers to learning could gain from receiving their education at such a school (IP1, FP4, FP1). Some of these comments are mentioned below:

- "At least there is that change because this year we had [a] few of our learners that went to [the special school] and the parents they understood … they have accepted that" (IP3, p.5).

- "They can earn money by having those skills from there [referring to the special school]" (FP2, p.2).

6.9 Summary of the emerging factors

This chapter showed that a number of factors emerged during this case study that affect the implementation of Inclusive Education policy as well as the assessment processes that teachers used. These factors were: the abuse of alcohol, the abuse of the social grant, family relationships, health issues and the attitude towards special needs education.

All these factors, besides the health issues, were extrinsic factors causing significant barriers to learning at the Welcome Primary School. The serious implications of the abuse of alcohol by parents, in particular the pregnant mothers, was discussed in some detail. It became clear that the learners with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome make up a significant percentage of learners referred to the special needs school. In addition the role of the parents in the management of barriers to learning emerged as significant in the assessment process at the Welcome Primary School. Without the co-operation of the parents in the SIAS strategy the process of assessment becomes compromised and the learners' support needs cannot be met. This is further influenced by the fact that so many learners do not live with their parents but rather with relatives who then do not have the necessary information about the learner to help the ILST and the DBST to make informed decisions. All these factors, therefore, influence the implementation of an Inclusive Education system and must be addressed.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

It may seem clichéd to say that this research study has been about the journey rather than the destination. It was the insights gained during the process of the research that have reshaped my work as a teacher, teacher educator and project coordinator. To some extent critics of my choice of a research site at a no-fee-paying primary school were correct: what could I possibly find there that wasn't already known. They told me that "nothing happens at these schools", but they were wrong because I found some dedicated teachers at the school and a willingness to learn in the face of some daunting challenges that had to be faced on a daily basis. I gained valuable insight into conditions that affect the majority of our South African learners who experience barriers to learning and for whom the introduction of Inclusive Education could make a difference.

7.2 Synthesis of the study

This study set out to investigate the implementation of Inclusive Education in a South African context by conducting a case study at an Eastern Cape no-fee-paying primary school. It looked at how the government policy as set out in *Education White Paper 6* (EWP6) (DoE, 2001) is being implemented by teachers at such a school. The study further investigated the introduction of the *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support* (SIAS strategy) (DoE, 2008a) to understand how teachers identify and assess barriers to learning. In addition it looked at emerging factors that could impact on the implementation of this policy.

A literature review helped me to place EWP6 and the SIAS strategy within the historical context of Inclusive Education as well as pointing to some of the discourses and trends in the Inclusive Education debate both internationally and locally. The literature further showed that there are common as well as unique challenges facing the implementation of

Inclusive Education in South Africa. This study has addressed the following four challenges (refer to Sections 2.6.1; 2.6.2; 2.6.3 and 2.6.4):

- Teachers' understanding of inclusive education
- Teacher development and training
- Cultural belief systems that affect the implementation of inclusive education
- Financial implications for the implementation of inclusive education

As such this study, although small, contributed to building the research field around inclusive education.

The time-frame of the research was compromised by the part-time study programme and I had to confront the reality of literature that needed to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to keep the research relevant within the constantly changing context of policy implementation in the Eastern Cape Province (see Section 3.10.2, Lotz-Sisitka, 2000). At an Inclusive Directorate (Eastern Cape) meeting it became clear to me that the MEC for Education of the Eastern Cape did not understand the basic concept of Inclusive Education (Inclusive Education Indaba, EC, 2012). This reminded me of the statement made ten years earlier that the Education and Social Support Staff (ESSS) needed to make "a paradigm shift in their minds and work" if Inclusive Education was to succeed in South Africa (Hay, 2003, p. 137). It seems that the Eastern Cape Province still needs to make the shift.

In Chapter Three I discussed the methodology of qualitative research and the interpretive paradigm within which the research has been located. The case study method allowed me to research a specific school to gain a rich description of the teachers' assessment strategies and the policy implementation challenges that a no-fee-paying school faces. I very soon became aware of the "messiness and challenges of qualitative research" as I faced a number of "difficulties and dilemmas" (Wilmot, 2005, p. 329) in my study as the research became interwoven with my work and the Welcome Primary School. My role as a participant observer with the resultant field notes, the semi-structured interviews that I conducted as well as documents that were generated by meetings and education conferences, all helped me to investigate and refine my research goals.

The study also confronted me with a number of challenges that placed limitations on the research findings. One challenge was that the selection of the participants was, to some extent, determined by the availability of the teachers and my personal time constraints rather than my preferred choice of the participants (refer to Section 3.8). Another challenge was that the language issues had to constantly be taken into consideration to avoid coming to conclusions that could be ambiguous (refer to Section 3.13.3). In addition the timing of my visits to the school came under threat when the school encountered problems with its water supply. This meant that the principal often sent the children home at noon and that was the time that my visit started every Friday. However, I found that this particular challenge gave me opportunities to interact with the teachers in their classrooms where they could discuss their learners that were experiencing barriers to learning with me, showing me workbooks and asking for advice without the distraction of a large class. Qualitative research gave me the flexibility to adapt to the situations as they arose and this added to the thick description of my research as I was able to gain deeper insight into the dynamics of the school.

In the daily course of my work at the special needs school I continued to have contact with a number of other primary schools in the district and I was able to see that they had similar problems to those at the Welcome Primary School. This made me aware that one school could well be taken to be reasonably representative of similar schools in the education district (refer to Sections 1.4 and 1.5).

In Chapters Four, Five and Six I analysed the data according to my research goals and came up with a number of key findings.

7.3 Key findings

As the research was conducted in three phases over a four year period, it provided time to review the data from different perspectives. While being involved with the school and conducting the interviews I found that I had a particular perspective on the data. This view deepened when I removed myself from the research site and was able to review the data from a broader perspective. The key findings were as follows:

7.3.1 The implementation process

In the context of the Welcome Primary School there was a lack of meaningful advocacy around the implementation of EWP6. The staff at the school had not received any specific training in this policy and had not engaged with the actual document. From this study it emerged that the only teachers in the district that received any training in the implementation of EWP6 and the SIAS strategy from the provincial Department of Basic Education was one teacher in the special needs sector of education. This has meant that teachers at ordinary public schools are ignorant of the basic principles of Inclusive Education and do not understand how to implement EWP6. Any reference to the EWP6 policy was in relation to the SIAS strategy training that some teachers had received. Knowledge of Inclusive Education was, therefore, very limited and implementation was hampered by this lack of epistemological knowledge (refer to Section 4.4.1).

The training of teachers for the implementation of the SIAS strategy was conducted using the "cascade" method which the literature review showed not to be an effective method of training (see Sections 2.6.2 and 4.2). This implies that the Eastern Cape Department of Education takes little cognisance of research that has been conducted, even in its own province (Danida project results published by the DoE, 2002). I found that context specific training of teachers was more effective in helping teachers to understand the SIAS strategy. Actual usage of the documents was more effective if the teachers had someone who has knowledge of the process to assist them to fill in the first few forms. This relates to the literature that advocates teacher education that should be context specific and school based (Forlin, 2010, p. 248). The Department of Basic Education must begin to acknowledge the role of the classroom teachers as the "ultimate change agents" (Bruner, 1996, p. 84) when it comes to policy implementation. It is only in the classrooms that inclusive education can be implemented and it is these classroom teachers that according to Ladbrook (2009, p. 138) "hold the key to the door still firmly closed" for the learners with barriers to learning in this district and who all have the right to quality education.

It further emerged that language usage in policies could be a concern for their successful implementation as teachers did not always understand what the instructions in the documents meant and were daunted by requests to fill in forms like the SNA 1 & 2 or the

retention form (see Section 5.7.2). Language is the medium through which "we make sense of the world and ourselves, and then present these understandings to others" (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 96) and if teachers, therefore, are not making sense of policy they cannot communicate important information to others.

7.3.2 Teachers' understanding and practice of learner assessment

Assessment of learners' barriers to learning was a relatively new concept. Teachers used informal classroom assessments and traditional tests to assess the learners. There was very little individual assessment of learners' support needs and no teachers were implementing an Individual Education Plan or Individual Support Plan as outlined in the SIAS strategy. Teachers had a good verbal knowledge of learners with support needs but found it challenging to put this verbal knowledge into a written document (refer to Section 5.6). This study found that only the first two stages of the SIAS strategy were being implemented and then only partially. There was no support from the District Based Support Team to continue with the process. This meant that the medical model of assessment was still being adhered to in the research district with little evidence of a move to a social model of assessment or of assessment of a learner's real support needs in terms of the SIAS strategy.

The Welcome Primary School had a number of challenges to contend with during the period of this research. The staffing issues, water supply problems and over-crowded classrooms made any support strategies for learners who experienced barriers to learning impossible to implement. Teachers were theoretically willing to help learners but found the daily realities too daunting to make a difference. Departmental demands in paperwork further undermined any willingness to help learners with higher support needs.

Parental issues played an important role in how teachers assessed learners who were experiencing barriers to learning. Very often any assessment process came to a halt when parents did not cooperate with the teachers. In addition teachers noted how other factors were impacting on the parents and their role in their children's lives.

7.3.3 Emergent factors impacting on policy implementation

The most significant factor to emerge from this study was the role that alcohol abuse plays in affecting learners' ability to learn. The majority of the learners who were experiencing barriers to learning came from homes where the teachers thought there was alcohol abuse. Young mothers were drinking during their pregnancies resulting in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) being prevalent within this community of learners. If the learners were not affected by FASD then the lack of parental support at home because of alcohol abuse exacerbated learners' barriers to learning. This research found that around 30% of learners referred to the special needs school were affected by FASD. In 1994 I had one learner with FASD in a class of 14 severely disabled learners, but in 2009 I had five learners with diagnosed FASD in a class of 12 learners with severe barriers to learning. This represents an increase from 7% to 42% over a 15 year period in one special needs class. This increase in FASD in the educational district has significant implications for educational funding (Section 2.6.4). A learner enrolled at the special needs school receives eight times more government subsidy than a learner attending a no-fee-paying primary school. The implications for those learners whose FASD is less severe but who do not receive appropriate support in the ordinary public schools are significant in that these learners are more likely to drop out of school and to become involved in crime related behaviour (Rendall-Mkosi, 2008, p. 58).

Another factor that emerged was that many learners did not live with their biological parents. It was culturally accepted that children live with their grandmothers, but children in these environments were generally not receiving help with homework. In addition there was a lack of support at the school and this led to significant barriers to learning for the children. Often the grandmothers were too old to manage their grandchildren and could not provide appropriate stimulation for them.

Young mothers frequently seem to abandon their children but still claim the child support grant for themselves (refer to Section 6.5). The person caring for the child did not benefit from the child support grant whilst the mothers used the money for their personal needs, often buying alcohol instead of food for their children. In this type of environment teachers found it challenging to implement the SIAS strategy.

7.3.4 Learners with barriers to learning and the retention factor

The national assessment policy states that a learner may not repeat more than once per phase (see Section 5.7). Teachers found that some learners were being disadvantaged by this rule as there was a significant "gap" between their homes and the school environment. Poor children often pay "the social price of poverty" by not being in a state that prepares them to learn when they arrive at school (Bloch, 2009, p. 123). In addition, a number of learners were starting Grade R too young (aged four) and never caught up with their peers if not given an opportunity to consolidate their school readiness skills. Research shows that young children mature at different times and although they may appear to lag behind initially can catch up with the correct interventions (Livingstone, 2008, p. 229).

Parents were also trying to avoid repetition in Grade R as they had to pay for their children's education in Grade R while there were no fees from Grade 1 upwards. This financial implication has a detrimental effect on the learners as they never have an opportunity to consolidate a solid foundation in basic numeracy and literacy, resulting in learner drop-out rates increasing in the higher grades. It was not as if teachers were advocating indefinite retention in the Foundation Phase, but rather two possible retentions within the Foundation Phase, especially for those learners who were very young for their class. This was confirmed by my assessment of the Grade 2 learners who were seen to be experiencing barriers to learning. I found that the teachers thought many of them should be sent to the special needs school whilst my assessment of these learners showed a learning delay rather than a cognitive disability. The prognosis for a learner struggling with basic reading, writing and maths in Grade 2 is bleak in a no-fee-paying school. There is a concern that retention of learners with serious disabilities will delay their identification and compound their problems rather than accessing suitable education for them. It is generally accepted that early assessment is essential for successful intervention and support (refer to Section 5.2). The DBST should be implementing support programmes according to the SIAS strategy but with a lack of experienced staff to implement such policies at district level there seems to be little hope for the learners' future. The study highlights the fact that appropriate qualifications amongst the district personnel is very important for the implementation of Inclusive Education.

7.3.5 Policy: rhetoric versus practice/reality

Education officials regularly refer to EWP6 at meetings that involve teachers and therapists from special schools, but at no meeting of principals or heads of department of public ordinary schools have I found EWP6 to be discussed or promoted. Does this mean that EWP6 remains firmly in the realm of rhetoric in the Eastern Cape Department of Education? In the education district where this study took place the official in charge of the DBST has no experience of dealing with learners experiencing barriers to learning and does not provide concrete assistance to the schools. One member of the team has experience in supporting learners with serious disabilities and is acknowledged by the Welcome Primary School, but this member has not interacted with the school during 2012 leaving the teachers confused.

The implementation of the SIAS strategy (which is part of the EWP6 implementation process) seems to be in the same situation as EWP6 with some exceptions. Schools have tried to constitute Institution Level Support Teams (ILSTs), but these teams are still only beginning to grapple with the enormity of the task that faces them. My finding is that the ILSTs have been formed without particular reference to the theory on which EWP6 is based. It is my contention that the identification of learners with barriers to learning in this particular district remains based on the medical model where the focus is still on what is "wrong" with the learner rather than on systemic, social or pedagogic challenges. A psychologist's report is not understood in the context of learner support but is rather seen as a 'passport' into the special needs school.

During my research provincial officials were always evasive about the SIAS strategy at meetings with special schools. At the Inclusive Education Indaba (October 2012), it was briefly stated that the SIAS strategy was being revised, but that until the revised version was available schools must continue to use the existing (but unsuitable) version. When the 'new' revised SIAS document is presented to teachers they will once again be confronted with yet more paperwork and be expected to implement it without questioning why they were not consulted on the changes.

This brings me back to the contentions of Adler & Reed (2002). Policy is sound and commendable, but the way that teachers are expected to implement these policies on minimal training and with even less theoretical training, is a problem. It is this tension

between the “principles of teaching and learning” and the “direct experience in the classroom” that has to be addressed (Adler & Reed, 2002, p.5). When teachers are expected to foster inclusive classrooms according to EWP6 and develop Individual Education Plans (IEP) for learners with higher support needs as well as achieve good results on the national assessments, they encounter tensions within their teaching strategies. It is these two demands of “caring for all and producing good results” that can pull on classroom practices in contradictory ways (Adler & Reed, 2002, p. 8).

7.4 Recommendations

This research study has come to similar conclusions as other researchers (Ladbrook, 2009; Schoeman, 2012) and yet there are findings that give a different perspective on the implementation of Inclusive Education and highlight the unique situation in a specific Eastern Cape district of education. The following recommendations are made:

- For the SIAS process to move forward, the Department of Basic Education must provide ‘on site’ assistance to the Institution Level Support Teams at the schools by a well qualified District Based Support Team.

- The District Based Support Team must provide unique support to each school as every learner’s support needs will be unique to that specific learner and his/her school.

- Teachers need direct assistance while learning to complete essential documentation for the SIAS process which must include Individual Education Plans for ‘at risk’ learners.

- The SIAS documents should have isiXhosa translations under every section to assist isiXhosa speaking teachers to fully understand the content of the documents and to avoid confusion.

- District Based Support Team members must have a regular time to visit a school to support the teachers on a weekly, fortnightly or even monthly basis. Both the DBST and the ILST teams must commit fully to such a programme.

- The roles of District Based Support Team members need to be clearly defined and they must at all times prioritise their work with individual schools.

- The District Based Support Team members must establish a support base for learners who are experiencing barriers to learning by involving other government departments such as the Department of Health or the Department of Social Development in bringing support to the learners.

- The Institution Level Support Team co-ordinators should preferably be teachers at post level 2 or 3 to obtain compliance from the full staff at a school.

- The District Office should identify a Full Service School within the district as soon as possible to prevent learners from dropping out of the education system and thereby be able to provide higher levels of support.

- The Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education must create posts for Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO) to be based at all primary and secondary schools to coordinate learner support needs.

- The Department of Education must fill all vacant teaching posts to prevent thousands of children from not receiving their rightful education and from becoming learners with high support needs.

- As a matter of national urgency the Department of Basic Education must confront the escalating problem of alcohol abuse and the resultant challenges of a large number of learners with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

- Policy makers must engage with cultural issues around oral reports versus written reports to bridge the gap that exists in the provision of meaningful assessments for learners that experience barriers to learning.

- Research must be done into the resistance shown by teachers to reading and engaging with policy documents.

7.5 Conclusion

Implementing Inclusive Education according to EWP6 and the SIAS strategy is a massive challenge facing the South African Department of Basic Education, but the fact that there is engagement with the process (however small), presents some measure of hope for a better future for those learners that have experienced the injustice of exclusion from education and society. We need to constantly remind all who are involved with teacher education that "[i]nclusion requires teachers to respond to constantly changing educational environments and to do so with high levels of civic awareness and educational values of equity and social justice" (Forlin, 2010, p. 252). The Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education will have to 'catch up' to some of the other provinces in its delivery of every child's constitutional right to education in an inclusive school environment because "inclusive education is not merely a characteristic of a democratic society, it is essential to it" (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999, p 21).

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PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

p. 23: Anonymous, teachers attending SIAS training workshop, May 2009.

p. 23: Anonymous, ESSS officials from local district office attending the interdepartmental SIAS training lecture, October 2009.

p. 23: Anonymous, Foundation Phase teachers attending ESSS workshop, November 2009.

p. 24: Anonymous, Principal of the Welcome Primary School, 2010, personal communication.

p.24: Anonymous, Foundation Phase Teacher at Welcome Primary School, November 2009, personal communication.

p. 33: Anonymous, Principal of the local special needs school, September 2011, personal communication.

p. 50: Anonymous, Molteno Project Co-ordinator, August, 2011, personal communication.

p. 69: Anonymous, Circuit Manager of the Welcome Primary School, November 2011, personal communication.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:

My research aims are:

- To describe and analyse how teachers at a particular school understand and implement Inclusive Education through the SIAS strategy.
- To describe and analyse teachers' practices in assessing barriers to learning and what, if any, challenges and difficulties they may be experiencing.
- To describe and analyse emergent factors that impact on policy.

PARTICIPANT:	**DATE:**	
Questions	**Prompts**	**Probes**
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION		
1. (a) What do you understand by Inclusive Education?	Explain Tell me more… When did you…	Policy – Do you know it? EWP 6- Are you familiar with…. Who do you think should be included?
(b) Could you tell me how you have experienced inclusion/exclusion in your community?	What happened... How did you feel	In the community? Personally? Other's beliefs, practices, attitudes around including people with disability Impact of exclusion/inclusion?
(c) How would you say schools are implementing Inclusive Education	What do you see?	Schools in general? Management's role

SIAS STRATEGY		
2. (a) Can you tell me about the SIAS strategy?	When …. Where ….. How …….	What do you understand it to be ? Screening, Identification, Assessment, Support Training? Forms?
(b) What is your understanding of the ILST and DBST	Tell me more	Who serves on the ILST - Staff ? Who is on DBST- District office
(c) How do you think a school can implement the SIAS strategy?	Expain Elaborate	What documents are used? Learner Profile? What procedure is followed? Who helps to complete the forms? Challenges?
BARRIERS TO LEARNING:		
3. What do you think is meant by barriers to learning? (There are so many theories about the causes of disability. What do you think could be the cause of a disability or barriers to learning?)	Your experiences Examples	Types of barriers Terminology Intrinsic/extrinsic: illness/poverty What kinds of barriers have you encountered?
4. Could you explain the steps you take at your school when you have a learner with barriers to learning?	Explain Do you mean..	Support Forms – SIAS? Marks

		Interventions - After hours
5. Can you tell me how you go about assessing a learner in your classroom who is experiencing barriers to learning?	How do you do... Why Explain	Forms of assessment used Personal methods How do you establish levels of functioning? Reading, writing, numeracy.? How do you record findings? Files on pupils? Role of colleagues (HOD)
6. What do you feel about having learners with barriers to learning in your classroom?	How do you feel? Explain Can you ….	Challenges you experience? Difficulties with these learners? Positive experiences? Negative experiences?
7. Now that we have spoken about barriers to learning, can you tell me how you are implementing Inclusive Education in your classroom?	Explain further	Strategies you are using? Challenges Successes
Conclusion: Is there anything you want to add or ask?		

APPENDIX B

K. McConnachie – Research Data for MEd - Rhodes University, Dept. of Education

WEEKLY RECORD of visits/observations/interviews/conversations.

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PURPOSE: _____

_____

PRESENT:

_____

_____

_____

COMMENT:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Province of the EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

SUBSIDY FOR SPECIALISED EDUCATION – 2012/13

NAME OF SCHOOL: [redacted] SCHOOL

EMIS: 2001 [redacted]

DISABILITY: SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

NO. OF DAY LEARNERS: 142

NO. OF RESIDENTIAL LEARNERS: 0

TOTAL: 142

COMPONENT/ ITEM	A TUITION	B ADMIN MAINT EQUIP/BUILD	C MAINT. HOSTEL	D TRANSPORT		E MAINT. RESID. LEARNERS	TOTAL ANNUAL SUBSIDY	AMOUNT PER TRANSFER
				D1 DAY LEARNERS	D2 RESID. LEARNERS			
Rand value X No. of learners	1200 X 142	3500 X 142	1200 X 0	5000 X 142	2000 x 0	5000 X 0		
Total Amount	R 170,400.00	R 497,000.00	R 0.00	R 710,000.00	R 0.00	R 0.00		
% Subsidised	99	97	90	Set rate	Set rate	Set rate		
Subsidy	R 168,696.00	R 482,090.00	R 0.00	R 710,000.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	**R1,360,786.00**	
Amount Granted 66.6185%	R 112,382.71	R 321,161.02	R 0.00	R 472,991.19	R 0.00	R 0.00	**R 906,534.91**	**R 453,267.46**

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Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

.....

Date

Enquiries: Mrs. [redacted] Tel: 040 [redacted]

APPENDIX C