

Views of the journey of grade 1 learners with barriers to learning, in the inclusive education system: A multi-level systemic investigation

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ABSTRACT

Embedded in South Africa's humanitarian discourse, inclusive education (IE) followed global trends of inclusion of all people into wider society without discrimination. Inclusion in mainstream schools should also, according to the Salamanca agreement provide equal quality education, enabling learners with special educational needs (LSEN) to reach their full potential as a basic human right. IE started in South Africa with the implementation of the inclusive policy EWP6 in 2001. Including all children with barriers to learning in schools in their communities promoted social inclusion with their peers. The DoE introduced the Policy of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) in 2014. This policy was implemented to assist teachers to identify learning barriers, as a means of offering support to these learners through the inclusive system. However, it seems that educators found this process cumbersome, without resources to maintain the process and with multiple systemic barriers preventing, rather than enhancing, support to LSEN.

This multi-level systemic study explores the views of educators and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of the IE system in supporting LSEN, to serve the best interests of these learners in their first year of formal schooling. The study was conducted in three selected diverse mainstream Eastern Cape (EC) rural schools, involving the views of educators, district officials and parents. The study probed the impact of the inclusive system on LSEN's development and social wellbeing, the perceived effects and benefits of the current system, and how the education model contributes towards human rights objectives and constitutional imperatives.

The study acknowledges the theories and policies of the current inclusive system as promoting inclusion, but not being successfully realised in rural areas in the South African context, due to several systemic and contextual barriers. The findings revealed that although all participants noted the possible benefits of IE, the current system did not serve the individual educational needs of LSEN in rural mainstream schools, in their first formal year of schooling. Several constraints were reported including lack of resources, insufficient Allied Health support services, and insufficient training of educators. These lead to feelings of inadequacy in educators, along with systemic and contextual barriers and financial constraints in the schools. There also seems to be a

need for better collaboration between education and other departments serving children and communities.

To conclude, this study suggests a broader multi-level networked system, in which there needs to be greater interaction between the DoE and other government departments supporting children with barriers, like the Departments of Health (DoH), Social Development (DSD) and Justice (DoJ).

DECLARATION

I, Cornelia Margaretha van Vuuren, declare that this research is a result of my own work except where otherwise stated. I have given the full acknowledgement of sources referred in the text. This thesis has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C.M. van Vuuren', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Cornelia Margaretha van Vuuren

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To my supervisor Professor Akhurst, I want to thank you for your calm and encouraging approach throughout this journey. Your wealth of knowledge and wisdom was a great inspiration to me. Know that it is highly appreciated.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEM:	Council of Education Ministers
CRPD:	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
DOJ:	Department of Justice
DSG:	Department of Social Development
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
ECDoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
EHC:	Education and Health Care
ESSS:	Educational Social Support Services
EU:	European union
EWP6:	Education White Paper 6
FARR	Foundation for Alcohol Related Research
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder
FP:	Foundation Phase
FSS:	Full-Service School
IDS&G	Institutional Development Support & Governance
IE:	Inclusive Education
LoLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSAs:	Learner Support Agents
LSEN:	Learners with Special Educational Needs
NCESS:	National Committee for Education Support Services
NDoE:	National Department of Education
NEEDU:	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNSF:	National Norms and Standards to Funding
PMG:	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
PPM	Post-Provisioning Model
SASA:	South African Schools Act
SASSA:	South African Social Security Agency
SA-SAMS:	South African School Administration Management System
SBST:	School Based Support team
SEN:	Special Education Needs

SEND Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SGB: School Governing Body
SID: Severe Intellectually Disabled
UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF: United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WHO: World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The idea of inclusive education (IE) started worldwide as a human rights prerogative, to include learners with disabilities in ordinary mainstream schools. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1994b; UNESCO, 2018) report focussed on including vulnerable people by promoting their human rights, and participating in equal education and learning without discrimination, marginalisation, or exclusion (Rieser, 2012). For South Africans, there was also further motivation in the context of our history and the resulting inequalities of the apartheid system, where most of the funding and resources went to white schools (Ndimande, 2016). IE entails responding to the diverse needs of learners without discrimination in terms of disability, gender, race, culture or community (Rieser, 2012). Professor Kader Asmal, the then Minister of Education, made it clear in his introduction of Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) that the government strove to implement special needs education as part of a non-racial education system (Department of Education (DoE), 2001b).

South Africa adopted IE and presented the inclusive policy, EWP6, in 2001. It was introduced to build a non-discriminative education system to represent a humane society, including all learners indiscriminately. This policy proposed a mix of institutional structures, including district support systems and incorporating special schools as resource centres contemplated to be a more cost-effective option than the previous education system. Firstly, former education departments were replaced with one National Department of Education (Maher, 2009). Further suggestions, as presented in EWP6 (DoE, 2001b), were that an inclusive section with specialists must form part of a professional district base support team to support learners with barriers. Special schools were to be strengthened and made part of the district support services. These schools, with their expertise and resources, were to act as resource centres to support neighbourhood schools. Another proposed initiative was to change some primary mainstream schools in neighbourhoods into all-inclusive Full-Service schools. The White Paper also includes and acknowledges the central role played by educators and parents in the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners with severe disabilities in special schools (DoE, 2001b).

Commencing in the late 1980s and continuing into the early 1990s, more educational systems moved towards inclusivity and equality, motivated by an invigorated emphasis on human rights, as declared by the United Nations (UN) in the 1948 and the 1989 Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1948; UN, 1989; UN, 1993). This emphasis was further initiated by the Salamanca Statement's recommendation (UNESCO, 1994a) that IE should be adopted as a law and policy by governments and that all learners should be enrolled in mainstream schools.

Children are considered holistically, and their emotional, social, educational, and physical needs must be integrated according to their potentials and developmental stages, to achieve the required educational outcomes. If any of these domains is neglected, the child will not reach his or her optimal potential (Hartman, 2012). Learners with barriers to learning have specific and individual needs. Only meeting and fulfilling these specific needs will lead to fully developed, confident and content human beings who will be able to participate in society. The foundation phases are crucial for addressing achievement gaps. Equal Education's annual report highlights the importance of early childhood development and the strengthening of the foundation phase: "...intense advocacy and activism are needed to address challenges in early childhood development and in rural areas especially" (Equal Education, 2017, p.12).

Internationally, the inclusive model focussed initially on accessibility and the inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools (European Union (EU), 2017). The 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) promoted that including learners with disabilities in mainstream schools would enable social integration and participation in the values and culture of their communities. IE systems must ensure that all learners are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities, alongside their peers (Schwab et al., 2015). Internationally, the Nordic countries report the most successes with inclusion, but special education is still an alternative form of education for children with special needs (Andriichuck, 2017).

In October 1996, a South African investigation into special needs by the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services found that quality specialised education was only available for a small, privileged population of learners and that the education system did not cater for the diverse needs of all learners in South Africa (DoE, 2001b).

Because of the enormous need to reform the system post-1994, many policies and guidelines emerged to reform special needs services in education, starting with the EWP6 in 2001 (DoE, 2001b). This was a framework policy to build an IE system, aimed at including children identified with special needs in all schools. Some of the latest policies to be published are the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DoE, 2014b); the discussion and roll-out strategy of the Three-stream Model, to cater to learners with different needs in mainstream schools (PGM, 2018), and the draft Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Grades R-5 for Learners with Severe Intellectual Disability (SID) (DoE, 2018). Although a policy provides guidelines, it can only be delivered if the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is tasked with affording the schools and educators the means and resources for implementation.

Since the adoption of the policy, EWP6 on inclusion in 2001, all learners with disabilities were to be included and could attend mainstream schools in their communities. However, most schools were not equipped to accommodate these learners; furthermore, educators were not qualified and trained to accommodate learners with various disabilities in their classrooms, and no adapted curriculum was available (Mayaba, 2008). Research showed that educators felt that they could not provide learners with special education needs (LSEN) with quality education to reach their full potential in the mainstream school without discriminating against these learners (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016; Mayaba, 2008)

Previous research shows that educators in mainstream schools feel inadequate to accommodate LSEN due to various reasons: 1) educators are not familiarised with the different disabilities and find it challenging to adapt the curriculum accordingly; 2) overcrowded classrooms, no classroom assistants and insufficient human resources; and 3) lack of professional staff in schools and challenges with infrastructure (Eloff &

Kgwete 2007; Hodgson & Kumalo, 2016; Khumalo, 2008; Mayaba, 2008). Therefore, placement of learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools in the community does not necessarily equal non-discrimination and quality education.

Children with a disability can only claim they receive equal education when the education system allows them to feel safe, supported, dignified, educated according to their specific needs, and allowed to reach their full potential emotionally, socially and scholastically. The McCoy Family Centre for Ethics in Society (2019, par. 2) states: "Treating the disabled the same as the non-disabled does not always suffice to treat them equally. These considerations are relevant to such practical decisions as to the placement of disabled learners in mainstream schools and their education therein". Therefore, it is imperative to explore the effect of mainstreaming on the development of learners with barriers to learning and the psychological impacts thereof. The question is the degree to which the system has succeeded or failed in its humanitarian and educational goals for LSEN, in their first year of formal schooling.

1.2 LOCATION OF THE RESEARCH

This study was conducted in the Eastern Cape, one of the most impoverished provinces in South Africa. The Eastern Cape was formed from an apartheid era province; and includes the former Transkei and Ciskei Bantustans' vast rural areas, like the Sarah Baartman District where this study was conducted. It is a province with a very high unemployment rate (Hendricks 2008), where the remains of apartheid still haunt education (Amnesty International, 2020). This is paired with poor management by the current government, which repeatedly has failed to meet its obligations to supply minimum norms and standards in education (Amnesty International, 2020), resulting in contextual and other factors contributing to challenges for implementing IE. Some of these factors include crumbling and unsafe infrastructure, schools remaining with pit latrines posing severe health risks, and overcrowded classrooms that lead to poor educational outcomes (Amnesty International, 2020).

The Equal Education (2016) NPO confirmed previous research that most schools in the Eastern Cape fail to meet the minimum standards of the South African Schools Act, with poor infrastructure and resources (Osman, 2015), where education suffers from inequity and dysfunctionality (Hendricks, 2008). A previous report by the Equal Education Centre (2016) showed that Eastern Cape schools struggle with a lack of primary resources due to a history of inequality and inadequate funding. According to this report, the system has failed in the education of learners, and the focus of the DBE should be on fixing under-resourced schools and better training of educators.

For this study, three coastal schools were selected in the Makhanda Circuit Management Centre (CMC) of the Sarah Baartman District. This is the largest district in terms of square kilometres in the Eastern Cape, with a high rate of alcohol abuse and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) (McConnachie, 2013). A needs assessment done by the Disability Action Research Team (DART) in the Nelmato coastal area showed that the learner educator ratio in the Makhanda CMC is 40 to 1. Many children with barriers to learning progress through grades without being able to read or write. There are no class assistants or remedial educators available; districts and schools are grossly understaffed and professional services in the community are also insufficient to support the enormous needs. Therefore, adequate identification and support of LSEN are not available (DART, 2018).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Since the introduction of the inclusive system, it seems that although research studies have been published on the successes or failures of the IE system in South Africa, challenges in the system remain and this appears especially so in the Eastern Cape. Glewwe (2013) conducted a study on education policies in developing countries and concluded that, despite large amounts of money spent, education outcomes are not as successful as in developed countries, and the impact of education policies on student outcomes in developing countries needs to be looked at to improve student achievement. This appears to be true for South Africa too.

In this proposed study, I gained information to assess whether the DoE provides reasonable accommodation to enable IE, as well as the provisioning of the necessary support measures to districts and schools to not only accommodate LSEN in mainstream schools, but to provide quality education according to their barrier-specific needs in a dignified manner. Information was gained on curriculum adaptations for LSEN learners, human resources, the number of learners in classrooms, barrier-specific assistive devices, emotional, social, and developmental information of LSEN in the school, and professional human resources in the schools and district offices. I also gathered accounts of the efficiency of the system as an entity.

As one of the most vulnerable of all vulnerable groups (UNESCO, 2018) in South Africa, the constitutional importance regarding the rights of LSEN to equality and dignity must be investigated and reflected upon. This is essential to inform the resultant scholastic outcomes for these learners in the current system from an educational perspective; however, the social, and psychological impacts over time will ultimately determine the success or failure of the inclusive system (Walton, 2018). By undertaking the journey with key stakeholders who influence the lives of selected children through their Grade one year, I attempted to determine whether the DBE acts in the best interest of the child with special educational needs (SEN), in meeting their educational and developmental needs.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

This research reviewed the experiences and progress of a cohort of Grade one learners with barriers to learning. It gathered information through the lenses of their educators in the inclusive mainstream classroom, as well as sampling the perspectives of other key informants in the education system.

Learners' journeys (progress) through the year were followed (as recorded by the educator in their learner profilers according to the SIAS policy). Therefore the researcher could assess whether the inclusive system met their developmental needs in a dignified manner. The class educators observed and assessed the learners' physical, cognitive, emotional, and social progress according to the norms for Grade

one children. The study, therefore, aimed to explore if learners with barriers to learning were reaching their full potentials in a Grade one inclusive classroom.

The first aim was to determine perceptions of how the inclusive system might impact the development and psychological well-being of the Grade one learner with barriers to learning, in mainstream education. The second aim was to explore to what extent the learners with barriers to learning are impacted by the inclusive system and the perceived benefits and limitations of the current education model. The third aim was to probe key informants' views of the education model, regarding international human rights objectives and the constitutional imperatives related to children, to serve the best interests of the learner with special education needs. This study, therefore, attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the inclusive system impact the development and psychological well-being of the Grade one learner with barriers to learning, in mainstream education?
2. To what extent are the learners with barriers to learning affected by the inclusive system, and what are the benefits of the current education model?
3. How does the current education model contribute towards international human rights objectives and the constitutional imperatives for children, to serve the best interest of the learner with special education needs?

1.5 THE EDUCATION MODEL IN SOUTH AFRICA

The education model in South Africa's central policy, EWP6 (DoE, 2001b), forms the foundation of our IE system and provides guidelines according to legislation and human rights guidelines. All other policies effective after 2001 arise from EWP6.

The hierarchy of the Department of Education (DoE) in South Africa from the top down is illustrated in Figure 1.1. This model uses concentric circles, as in the Bronfenbrenner (1979) model. Bronfenbrenner's model is often used in DoE because it explains the inter-related levels of the education system that shape the learners' experiences and development. This model is relevant to the study as it shows and guides a systemic approach between the different levels, explaining human behaviour in their social

environment. This Education model consists of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) as the overseer of education in South Africa, and this body is responsible for coordinating and promoting all actions in education. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) forms the next level of the National Department, which is responsible for policy design in schools. All primary and secondary schools are regulated by the DBE, which is responsible for educational programmes for learners from the compulsory pre-school year, Grade R to the final year of basic schooling, Grade 12. The next levels are the provincial departments, responsible for the management and the implementation of policies, as well as the budget of districts (of which there are 52 in South Africa) and schools in each of the nine provinces. Then follow the district offices in support of all mainstream and special schools in a district. The schools are divided into mainstream, Full-Service and special schools. Although all mainstream schools are inclusive schools and may not refuse any learner, South Africa also has Full-Service, all-inclusive mainstream schools that may include learners with low to moderate needs, as will be explained later in this chapter. Special schools are specialised schools, catering for learners with high educational needs according to their barriers of learning.

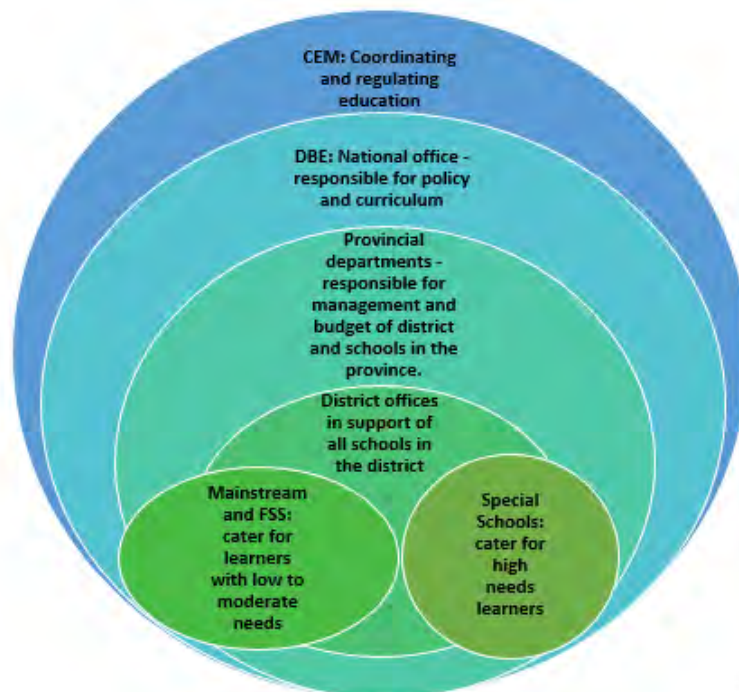


Figure 1: The Hierarchy of Interaction in the Education System

Although learners may be placed according to their level of needs, no learner may be refused in any mainstream school in their community. All schools, therefore, are inclusive schools (DoE, 2014b). According to the DBE (2010b) policy statement:

The DBE develops, maintains, and supports a South African school education system for the 21st century in which all citizens have access to lifelong learning, as well as education and training, which will, in turn, contribute towards improving quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic South Africa.

Access to learning is adequate if the school education system manages to be efficient and thriving, with the necessary support measures and systems available to learners, educators, schools and districts. Glewwe (2013) reasons that a school's efficiency level can be measured by the school's ability to achieve the country's education goals. To meet these goals, developing countries invest considerable amounts of money, but without necessarily achieving the expected outcomes (Glewwe, 2013). This is due to financial implications and idealistic policies (Engelbrecht et al., 2016) not meeting the needs of learners, with a gap existing between the conceptualisation of inclusion and the implementation thereof. Several research studies on IE implied that the lack of support, human and other resources in schools hampered IE or sometimes made it impossible to implement, especially for learners with barriers to learning (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Heeralal & Jama, 2014; Mahlo, 2017a).

1.6 THE OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE INCLUSIVE MODEL

From the early 2000s, the education system needed to implement a new operational framework, as EWP6 policy moved from a medical model with an emphasis on disability and diagnosis to an inclusive social model with an emphasis on support (DoE 2005). This was a shift from the old system to new structures, practices, assumptions, models and theories (DoE, 2005). This new IE needed to include theories and practices without discrimination against race, class, disability or gender. The proposed shifts in education, as illustrated in the guidelines by the DoE (2005), are illustrated below In Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Shifting from Special Education to IE

Theory Inclusive	Special Education Theory	Education Theory
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pathological - Deficits within the child - Categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barriers to learning - Barriers in the system and environment - Levels of support needed, e.g. high, moderate and low levels of support
Practices	Segregation of learners into special facilities	Includes all learners and reorganises support
Tools	Standardised tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion-referenced tests Educator-produced tests Assessing the potential to learn
Model	Special Education Act	The South African Schools Act
Pedagogy	Limited pedagogical possibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pedagogy of possibility, taking into consideration barriers to learning, multiple styles of intelligence and learning - high expectations, expanded learning opportunities

Adapted from: Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for Special Schools as Resource Centres (DoE, 2005, p. 11)

The EWP6 makes it clear that the constitutional responsibility is to ensure that all learners are educated. The policy also maintained that learners who experience barriers to learning should participate fully as school community members and should be provided with quality education through effective teaching and given the necessary

support. The policy on IE (IE) in EWP6: Special Needs Education acknowledges that all learners can learn, with support (DoE, 2001b). To achieve this mandate of the proposed inclusive system, the DoE later provided guidelines (DoE, 2014a) for the SIAS process of learners with barriers to learning, as prescribed by the SIAS policy (DoE, 2014b).

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

The following definitions and concepts from education policy statements guide the education system in South Africa and are relevant in supporting learners with barriers to learning.

SIAS process (DoE 2014b):

This is a process of screening, identification, assessment, and support to identify and support (SIAS) all learners with barriers to learning. The SIAS document provides a set of criteria called the Screening Needs Assessment form (SNA1), to be completed by the teachers to identify learners with barriers. Thereafter the school refers the learners to the district base support team for further assessment, diagnosis and support. The emphasis is on support rather than learner deficit. The policy provides for low, moderate, and high-level support through designed support programmes for all learners to gain access to learning. High-needs learners may gain placement in special schools, according to their needs (DoE, 2014a; DoE, 2014b).

Learner Profile File (DoE 2014b):

The SIAS policy requires educators to open a learner profile file for all learners in schools. The learner profile describes the learners' strengths and challenges. It includes formal and informal information about the learners, for example, copies of all medical and other reports such as the Road to Health clinic card, previous years' progress reports, concerns of the educator, and communication from parents. The learner profiler accompanies the learners throughout their school career. All information must be updated every year by the new educator (DoE, 2014b).

Mainstream School:

A mainstream school is an ordinary neighbourhood school. All children can attend mainstream schools in their neighbourhood. Schools are required to accommodate children with disabilities who fall in the “low needs” range (DoE, 2014b). According to the SIAS policy, all children should attend their local neighbourhood school first, regardless of their disabilities (South Africa: Equality Act, 2000; DoE, 1996).

Full-Service School (DoE, 2002; DBE, 2010a):

Full-Service or inclusive schools are mainstream education institutions that provide quality education to all learners by supplying the full range of learning needs in an equitable manner. Full-Service schools (FSS) are required to accommodate learners in the low to medium needs range. They should provide equity, quality and social justice in education so that all learners experience a sense of worth. FSS need to respond to diversity by providing an appropriate education for the individual needs of learners, irrespective of disability or differences in learning style or pace, or social difficulties (DBE, 2010a).

Special School (DoE, 2007):

Special schools are primary or high schools that are equipped to deliver a specialised education programme to learners requiring access to highly intensive educational support. Special schools cater for children with specific “severe” disabilities such as autism, severe mental handicap, deafness, or blindness. Once learners have been screened through the SIAS policy process at a mainstream school, they can be placed via the district in a special school. They should only be placed in special schools specialising in the accommodation of their specific disability. The education programmes in the special schools will be barrier specific to cater for the specific disability (DoE, 2007). A special school can also act as an area resource centre.

Resource Centre (DoE, 2005; DoE, 2007):

A special school resource centre (SSRC) is a special school that has been identified as a resource centre by the DoE. These special schools should be equipped to provide significant professional curriculum support and a range of support services to other special schools, FSS, and regular schools in their areas. Guidelines for special schools as resource centres (DoE, 2005) set out the role of these special schools in acting as resource centres. The special school resource centre will be integrated into the district-based support teams (DoE, 2005).

No-fee paying schools (Quintile 1 to 3), (DBE, 2017):

The South African Schools Act (Act no 84 of 1996) (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) makes provision for no-fee paying schools. The no-fee policy ranks schools according to the level of poverty in the community or area. According to the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF), all schools in South Africa are divided into socio-economic quintiles, where quintile 1 represents the poorest twenty per cent of learners in communities in the country and quintile 5 the best off. Schools receive funding from the government according to their quintile status. Quintiles 1 to 3 are declared no-fee paying schools and are prohibited from charging school fees. Quintile 4 and 5 schools receive less funding from the government and can charge school fees (DBE, 2017). According to section 36 of SASA (Act no 84 of 1996), all schools may do fundraising (Republic of South Africa, 1996b).

Subsidies:

The government, through the South African Schools Act of 1996, makes provision for exemption of school fees and provides subsidies to learners in fee-paying schools whose parents earn no income, or less than a certain amount of income. Children from less-affluent families who go to school in wards that are not rated amongst the poorest will attend fee-paying schools and the parents can apply for exemption of fees. The School Fee Exemption policy states that families can qualify for a total or partial exemption where the breadwinner's annual salary is less than ten times the amount of the school fees, or where the combined income of the mother and father is less than 30 times the annual school fee. Parents with financial constraints apply for exemption of school fees through the school governing body (SGB).

Learners with special educational needs (LSEN):

LSEN describes a learner with special educational needs. Learners are identified and assessed as regulated and described in the SIAS policy (DoE, 2014b). The process of screening and identification starts with the class educator. Identified learners are referred through the school-based support team (SBST) to the district-based support team (DBST) if the added support and remedial measures by the school were unsuccessful. The DBST then intervenes and might refer the learner for professional assessment and support, as prescribed by the SIAS process (DoE, 2014b).

Barriers to Learning:

Barriers to learning refer to difficulties that arise within the education system, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself, which prevent access to learning and development (DoE, 2001b). Barriers to learning include physiological, neurological, low cognition, and behavioural disorders, as well as socio-economic challenges. Language is not described as a barrier to learning, although we realise that in South Africa many learners are not educated in their home language. When the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) differs from the home language, many learners struggle to comprehend fundamental concepts (DBE, 2010d).

Pacesetters (DoE, 2018)

The Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS) makes provision for pacesetters in all grades and subjects, meaning clear instruction on what to teach, and guidance on timeframes for assessing certain content and skills.

Developmental Delays:

A developmental delay refers to delayed milestones in a child compared to other children of the same age. Delays may manifest in motor function, speech and language, cognitive ability, and play and social skills (Rosenberg et al., 2008). According to Nelson (in Kliegman & St. Geme, 2019), 5-15% of children may be diagnosed with low-intensity handicaps. These handicaps may lead to poor academic performance, poor social adjustment, and possible behavioural problems (Kliegman & St. Geme, 2019).

Vulnerable group:

The Children's Act, Act 38 of 2005 defines all children under the age of 18 as being part of a vulnerable group and it also recognises the vulnerability of disabled children (Kempen, 2020).

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE INCLUSIVE SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The DoE developed the SIAS policy over a period of 10 years (DoE, 2014b, pp 2). This policy was underpinned by the EWP6 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The final policy was promulgated in December 2014 as a national policy and was introduced to all districts and schools (DoE, 2014b). The policy is a well-researched document that makes provision for screening, identification, assessment, and support of learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools. It was implemented as a tool to guide educators and district officials in the support of learners with barriers or challenges that prevent them from optimal functioning in the education system. The district-based support team and the school-based support team participate to ensure that barriers to teaching and learning are addressed, and all learners are supported to participate and develop their full potential in their neighbourhood schools with their peers. The inclusive system provides three types of schools, with the understanding that all schools are inclusive centres of learning, care and support (DoE, 2014b):

1. Ordinary Schools (DoE, 2014b):

Ordinary schools offer low to moderate levels of support. For example, by:

- Facilitating access to grants.
- Differentiating lessons to cater for different learning styles.
- Accessing counselling services for learners.
- Accessing workshops on skills for educators.
- Accessing itinerant learning support services.
- Establishing well-functioning school-based support teams.

According to DoE (2014b), ordinary schools will not have sophisticated levels of resources or specialist staff, but they can access these resources from the Full-Service and special schools, and the circuit and district offices. Ordinary schools will admit all learners in their area – regardless of their difficulties – and take all possible measures to offer reasonable accommodation to learners with additional support needs and disabilities. While they might not immediately be able to offer the required levels of support to every learner they admit, the aim is to mobilise support through outreach services delivered by the district-based support team, FSS and special schools within the district. Outplacement of learners to FSS or special schools should be seen as a last resort.

The Three Streams Model (PMG, 2018) was recently introduced in a few selected mainstream secondary schools whereby learners will have the option between an academic stream, a technical-occupational stream and a technical-vocational stream. These streams will offer a diverse curriculum for learners.

2. Full-Service Schools (FSS):

FSS are ordinary schools that are equipped with additional support provisioning so that they can respond to a broader range of learning needs.

These include (DoE, 2002):

- Specialised support staff: a learning support educator (LSE) and a counsellor.
- Physical infrastructure: a support centre comprising a consulting room, health room, activity/training room with kitchenette, reception and storeroom, communal office space and disability-friendly toilets.
- Specialised learning and teaching support materials (LTSMs) and assistive devices such as textbooks in braille, computer software, etc.

Through this additional provisioning, the Full-Service school can:

- Offer moderate to high levels of support on-site.
- Act as a nodal point to deliver support to a group of schools.

3. Special Schools and Special Schools as Resource Centres (SSRC)

Special schools and SSRC are ordinary schools that are equipped with even greater support provisioning to cater to the needs of learners requiring high intensity and very specialised support. Through this additional provisioning, special schools and SSRC can (DoE, 2005) provide site-based specialised programmes to learners requiring high to very high levels of support. In addition, SSRCs are also able to act as a nodal point to provide support (specialist skills and resources) to a cluster of ordinary schools and FSS.

The additional provisioning is based on the programmes offered, rather than the category of disability. Although there is frequently a strong link between the category of disability (e.g., hearing, sight, motor) and the nature of a support programme offered, access to the support programme is not restricted to those who have a medically diagnosed disability – if the SIAS process has been followed (DoE, 2014b).

Through its outreach programme to ordinary and FSS, the SSRC will:

- Share specialist staff (e.g., therapist, psychologist, remedial educator, physiotherapist) by providing on-site support at these schools, or with staff exchange programmes.
- Share specialised equipment (e.g., specialised chairs, computers, hearing devices etc.) and assist with their maintenance.
- Share examples of good practice.
- Provide professional training programmes that help institutions to meet specific additional support requirements of learners.
- Assist the other types of schools with inter-sectoral collaboration and integrated service delivery, by participating at CBST/DBST level.

Despite excellent theories policies and regulations, it seems that theory and practice in the South African education system do not articulate. Savolainen et al. (2012) have mentioned that there were severe challenges to the successful implementation of IE in South Africa. Several studies later explained difficulties, economical and otherwise, experienced by mainstream schools and educators in the classrooms to accommodate learners with barriers to learning and made recommendations to enhance successful

teaching (Okyere et al., 2018; Timberlake, 2018). In the twenty years of existence of IE, it seems that numerous challenges still exist in the country, and many learners with barriers to learning have to exit their school careers without experiencing the quality education they are entitled to. Complex, interrelated issues such as divergent views on IE and contextual factors complicate the development of IE, despite numerous policies and implementation guidelines (Engelbrecht, 2019).

The UNESCO (2018) report on education and disability analysis of data from 49 countries worldwide further highlighted that people with disabilities are most of the time worse off than people without any disabilities. On average, disabled children are less likely to attend school and are more likely to be out of school. They have fewer years of schooling and are less likely to achieve basic literacy skills or to complete primary school (UNESCO, 2018).

The constitutional rights that EWP6 intended to protect include the right to basic education, not to be discriminated against and the right to dignity. If we accept that every child is a unique human being who will develop and learn at his or her own pace, we must also agree to the fact that this reality applies even more to special-needs children. The equal treatment of special-needs children presupposes that these children must be assisted with additional support to provide them with an opportunity equal to any other child. If we fail this test, we have failed in our constitutional duty not to discriminate against such a child. We would then also fail our duty to provide special-needs children with their constitutional right to basic education.

It is possible that a child who has not been provided with the basic right to education may experience resentment and feelings of not belonging, emphasising his/her differences to the extent that he or she is de facto the victim of discrimination. Such a child will then have to overcome further challenges to cope with curriculum expectations. This may lead to perceptions of failure and ultimately a loss of dignity. In this way, EWP6, although with good intentions might be a contributing factor to failures in the education system.

UNESCO's (2018) report on education and disability recommended a strong political will in all UN member states, better coordination among national and international agencies involved in the measurement of disability, and additional funding from international donors and foundations. UNESCO emphasised that joint efforts from all member states will promote better identification of disadvantaged populations, more targeted and efficient allocation of resources to those most in need, and eventually, equalise educational opportunities for all.

1.9 POLICIES AND LEGISLATION THAT DRIVE INCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.9.1 Key Policies in Education

Education in South Africa is governed by the following key policies and legislation (DBE, 2015/2016):

- The fundamental policy framework of the Ministry of Basic Education is stated in the Ministry's first White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System, published in February 1995.
- The National Education Policy Act (Nepa), 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) (Republic of South Africa, 1996c) brought into law the policies, and legislative and monitoring responsibilities of the Minister of Education, as well as the formal relations between national and provincial authorities.
- The South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) is aimed at ensuring that all learners have access to quality education without discrimination and makes schooling compulsory for children aged seven to fifteen.
- The SASA of 1996 was amended by the Education Laws Amendment Act, 2005 (Act 24 of 2005), which authorises the declaration of schools in poverty-stricken areas as "no-fee schools", and by the Education Laws Amendment Act, 2007 (Act 31 of 2007), which provides for the functions and responsibilities of school principals.
- The Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act 76 of 1998) (Republic of South Africa, 1998) regulates the professional, moral and ethical responsibilities of

educators, as well as educators' competency requirements. This Act and the South African Council for Educators (SACE) regulate the teaching corps.

- The National Curriculum Standards Grades R to 12 replaced the policy document, A Résumé of Industrial Programmes in Schools, Report 550 (89/03).
- The Education White Paper on ECD (2000) provides for the expansion and full participation of five-year-olds in pre-school Grade R education by 2010, and an improvement in the quality of programmes, curricula, and educator development for birth to four-year-olds and six- to nine-year-olds.

These key policies in education derived from the decision taken by the SA government to get an education system in place that will cater to all learners in SA without any prejudice (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). The first White Paper of 1996 was established to meet the goal of a new IE system in democratic South Africa. Therefore, the National Education Policy Act (Nepa) of 1996 was established to lay the foundation for the establishment of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM), as well as the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM), as intergovernmental forums that would collaborate in the development of a new education system (Republic of South Africa, 2015/2016). This, therefore, provided for the formulation of national policy in general, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policies for curriculum, assessment, language and quality assurance.

The SASA (1996) provides for two types of schools, namely independent and public schools. The provision in the Act for democratic school governance, through school-governing bodies (SGBs), has been implemented in public schools countrywide. The school-funding norms, outlined in the SASA of 1996, prioritise redress and target poverty regarding the allocation of funds for the public schooling system. The Act was amended in 2005 to declare no fee-paying schools in poverty-stricken areas. These schools receive more funding than fee-paying schools from the government to ensure quality education for all learners. In 2000, the Education White Paper 5 on ECD also made provision for compulsory schooling of pre-school Grade R learners to raise literacy levels during the early childhood developmental years of children in South Africa (DoE, 2001a). Together with the key policies, the government also designed

policies and guidelines relating to learners with barriers to learning to attempt quality education, according to their needs.

1.9.2 Policies and guidelines relating to learners with barriers to learning

- The EWP6 on IE (DoE, 2001b) describes the DBE's intention to implement IE at all levels in the system by 2020.
- The Education Laws Amendment Act, 2002 (Act 50 of 2002) set the age of admission to Grade 1 as the year in which the child turns seven.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) highlight how children with disabilities have the same rights as other children, for example, to health care, nutrition, education, social inclusion and protection from violence, abuse and neglect. Ensuring access to appropriate support, such as early childhood intervention (ECI) and education, can fulfil the rights of children with disabilities, promoting rich, fulfilling childhoods, and preparing them for full and meaningful participation in adulthood (UNICEF & WHO, 2012).
- Fourth Industrial Revolution: Department progress report (PMG – Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2018).
- Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of IE (DoE, 2002).
- The Policy on National Strategy for SIAS (DoE, 2014b).
- Guidelines on Curriculum Adaptation for Special Needs Learners (DoE, 2017).
- Three Streams Policy (PMG, 2018).
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No 108 of 1996 (Bill of Rights, Chapter 2) (Republic of South Africa, 1996c).
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006).
- Quality Education for All: Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development (DoE, 1997).
- Guidelines to Ensure Quality Education and Support in Special Schools and Special Resource Centres (DoE, 2014a).
- National Strategy on SIAS (DoE, 2014b).
- Guidelines for Full Service/Inclusive schools (DBE), 2010a).

- Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning (DBE, 2010b).
- Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom Through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (DBE, 2011).

According to the DoE (2001b) in EWP6, the inclusive system will facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable learners and reduce the barriers to learning through targeted support structures and mechanisms that will improve the retention of learners in the education system, particularly learners who are prone to dropping out. Education policy set school-going age at six years, in the year the learner turned seven; however, the school-going age of Grade 1 was changed to age five if children turned six on or before 30 June in their Grade 1 year. This will mean that learners will enter Grade R at four years of age in a country where the DoE themselves admitted, as previously discussed, that literacy levels are low.

The government (2010) appointed a National Planning Commission (NPC) to design a development plan for South Africa. The NPC (2011) diagnostic overview identified an absence of broad partnership and a failure to implement policies as the biggest challenges. It also identified failure in the public health system and education to meet the demand and sustain quality in public services. It confirms my experience as an official in DoE for over twenty years that, in theory, policies pertaining to learners with barriers to learning are comprehensive; however, these policies are not necessarily beneficial to these learners, if the implementation of these policies is slow or inefficient, mostly due to under-resourced institutions and facilities. In the government's planning document for 2030, they accept that transformation in education is slower than anticipated and blame it on slow spatial transformation in the democratic era (NPC, 2012). The SIAS draft Policy (DoE, 2008) was only introduced fully in the Eastern Cape in 2014. The Three Streams Policy (DoE, 2017b) has not been introduced in all schools, but a few schools were identified as pilot schools; and in the Sarah Baartman District, there are no educators allocated to these schools for the occupational programmes.

Although the Guidelines to Ensure Quality Education and Support in Special Schools and Special Resource Centres was drafted in 2007 (DoE, 2007), the occupational vocational curriculum (DoE, 2017a, DoE, 2017b) was only made available in 2018. Currently, in the Sarah Baartman District, educators and district officials appear not to be trained in curriculum adaptation.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the study with the research problem, aim and purpose of the study. It introduces the reader to the motivation for the shift in education from the medical to the social inclusive model. The reader is introduced to the education situation in the Eastern Cape and the location of the research study. It describes the operational framework of IE in South Africa and defines the concepts and terms used.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework for the development of learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive system. It explains the move from the medical to the social model and contemplates whether the system caters for learners' human rights in a dignified manner.

Chapter 3 explores the LSEN learner in the inclusive system and contemplates whether the system provides quality and dignified education for the learners with barriers to learning. It includes the possible importance of early childhood development and the role the level of school readiness plays in mastering the curriculum.

Chapter 4 describes the aim, research design and methodology of the study. Chapter 5 gives an overview of the participating schools and the educator, district, and parent participants.

Chapter 6 presents the analysis of educator questionnaires on the inclusive system and their perspectives on learner development. Chapter 7 analyses the focus group discussions through template analysis.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings of the study and proposes a networked model as a way to improve services. Chapter 9 provides the conclusions, strengths and weaknesses of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF LEARNERS

Over time, many measures have been taken to protect the rights of vulnerable groups including children. Important declarations, covenants and conventions include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1948); the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNDRC) (UN, 1959); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 1989).

Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, pg. 9):

(1) States parties recognise that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

(2) States parties recognise the right of the disabled child to special care....

(3) Recognising the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article ... shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development....

When contemplating children's needs, whether educational, emotional, physical, cognitive, or psycho-social, the basic human rights of children must be of utmost importance to always act in the best interest of a child (Republic of South Africa, 2006). Section 28(2) of the Constitution states that the best interest of the child is of paramount importance in all matters that affect the child. All actions taken must suit the needs of the child and protect the welfare of the child. Section 7 of the Children's

Act 38 of 2005 includes the child's age, gender, maturity level, level of education, background, and any other relevant characteristics of the child (Republic of South Africa, 2006) to understand the level of vulnerability. The objects of the Act include protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation, and the need to make provision for structures, services and the means for promoting and monitoring the healthy physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional and social development of children (Republic of South Africa, 2006).

In South Africa, the IE model, as outlined in EWP6, was selected to address the international and constitutional human rights obligations towards children (DoE, 2001). EWP6 introduced the specifics of the then newly envisaged IE and training system. and seemingly continues to be influenced by traditional ideologies from the global North (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). The essence of the new system indicates that the previous special schools, catering for special needs children, ought to be retained to serve as service hubs to mainstream schools within the district where these schools were situated. At the same time, the Department of Education undertook to invest in training (DoE, 2001) and capacitate mainstream schools to accommodate special needs children in mainstream schools. Short-, medium- and long-term plans were indicated, and the White Paper was set in motion.

It seems that after twenty years, no proper review and readjustment of EWP6 has occurred. Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018), in a study on decolonisation, indicated that it might be time to take a re-look at IE in South Africa. Special needs children, educators and indeed Provincial Departments of Education seemed to find themselves unable to provide for the capacity needed to even partially address the burden contained and promised in EWP6 (Amnesty International, 2020). This question follows: Was every child promised everything and did all children end up with almost nothing? It seems that the legitimate question to be answered in this regard is how this situation has impacted the rights to basic education of special needs (and all) children in South Africa. To what extent did IE impact the constitutional right to basic education not only of learners with barriers to learning but possibly all children in the education system? The answer to these questions within the South African educational contexts bears reference to the perceived successes or failures of EWP6.

As such, the outcomes of this study are relevant and must be considered for possible contribution to such investigations.

The full extent of the effects, following possible limitations in delivering on the promise of EWP6 will only be determined in future. The real challenge in South Africa is how to adapt the inclusive system favourably for South African circumstances since they still exist. This must be done within the confines of ever-increasing national debt and a stagnant economy (Amnesty International, 2020). Some immediate action is called for but cannot be instigated if the extent of the problem is not adequately assessed. The conflicting interests of special needs children and those of all other children, and the impact of catering for special needs children in mainstream schools without the necessary support, have not been assessed. It serves no purpose to speculate about the possible impacts of this broad situation; however, if it is found to have impacted, at all, the government may be forced to change course via the court system.

2.2 HISTORY OF THE INCLUSIVE SYSTEM AND SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS

The need for a more humanitarian approach, that also considered the human rights of children and vulnerable groups, arose after the Second World War (Law Library of Congress, 2007). Education and societies worldwide moved to a more sensitive approach concerning all humans, with emphasis on human rights and equal opportunities for vulnerable groups (UNICEF, 2001). As differently-abled children with barriers to learning qualify as one of the most vulnerable groups, the importance of quality education that caters for their specific needs became imperative. Soon after the war ended, the United Nations was established in 1945, and the UDHR was adopted by the end of 1948 in Paris. The declaration of human rights included the right to education. Article 26 stated the following (UN, 1948):

- (1) Everyone has the right to free education in the fundamental stages. Education shall be compulsory in the elementary stages. Technical, professional and higher education shall be available and equally accessible based on merit.

- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

The new invigorated awareness of human and individual rights also trickled through to most education systems throughout the world. Initiated by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), and the Salamanca agreement (UN, 1994) that was adopted by the world conference in 1994, the need for a more inclusive system developed.

The UN (1989) strived to improve the rights of all humans. Article 29 (UN, 1989) was developed to recognise the rights of children to develop to their full potential in a safe and protected environment without discrimination.

Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

- (1) States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
 - a. the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
 - b. the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
 - c. the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own;
 - d. the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.
 - e. the development of respect for the natural environment.

(2) No part of the present article or Article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform.

When contemplating the meaning of Article 29, it constitutes not only integrating learners into the system but also includes them in a manner where they will be granted the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. This will also mean that learners with barriers to learning must be granted the opportunity, like their peers, to develop to their fullest potential, not only academically but also socially, emotionally, and physically. The education system, as an integrated entity, must afford districts and schools the means, financially, structurally and in qualified human resources, to reach this goal, not only in theory and policies but in practice as well. The UN (1998) Convention on the Rights of the Child further implies that we all have to respect and protect the rights of others, including children.

The Salamanca agreement proposes provision for all learners in an IE framework, without discrimination against learners with disabilities or special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994b). Therefore, mainstream schools should be able to provide quality education for all learners in their community, regardless of their abilities or barriers to learning. This will mean that the diverse needs of learners must be considered and learning programmes cannot be “one size fits all” but must respond to the needs of the individual learner, catering for the specific disability and adapted accordingly.

However, the question must be asked whether one educator in a classroom, even with an educator aid or assistant, can be an expert in all the different disabilities or barriers of learners in the classroom. In the medical field, there are specialists in different fields, where there is a for example a cardiologist, ophthalmologist, orthopaedic surgeon, each an expert in a specific field. A person with an eye problem will not consult the cardiologist for expert advice on his eye condition; for the same reason, we can expect that learners with visual impairment will prefer a specialist educator in the field of visual impairment to optimise their learning possibilities. This study is based upon a broad question:

How does a developing country, with the prerequisites to align with the human rights declaration and the Salamanca Agreement, adapt their education system in the best interest of the child?

2.3 CHANGES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

After the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, the dire need for change in the education system was recognised. As a member of the United Nations, the South African government strove not only to remedy the inequalities of the apartheid era but also to align with the rest of the world and adhere to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994a) on principles, policy and practice in special needs education. The recommendations included that IE must be adopted as a law and policy by governments and that all learners should be enrolled in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994a).

The Salamanca agreement (UNESCO, 1994a) requested all governments to:

- Commit financially and prioritise IE by availing budgetary funding;
- Enrol all children, no matter their differences in ordinary schools unless there were compelling reasons for doing otherwise;
- Design educational programmes that support the diverse needs “within a child-centred pedagogy”;
- Invest in early identification and intervention;
- Involve parents, disabled organisations and community bodies in decision-making;
- Enhance vocational development by putting more significant effort into pre-school activities and strategies;
- Invest in initial and in-service training of educators;
- Promote close collaboration between government and non-government organisations, to the benefit of the special educational needs of learners.

IE can only thrive and succeed through a deliberate effort from the government with financial commitment and by making available intellectual, technical and human resources to bring the necessary change (DoE, 1997). The National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for

Education Support Services (NCESS) were appointed in 1996 to make recommendations on overcoming barriers to learning (DoE, 1997). The Commission and Committee pointed out that the strong emphasis on a medical model approach is not in the best interest of children with disabilities or barriers to learning. The commission recommended a systemic approach through a social model, with an emphasis on the support of learners with barriers rather than on their disabilities (DoE, 1997).

2.4 THE TRANSITION FROM THE MEDICAL MODEL TO THE SOCIAL MODEL

Since the introduction of the inclusive model after the drafting of the EWP6 (2001), education policies in South Africa demonstrated a paradigm shift from the medical model. This entailed a shift in emphasis on disability and placement in special schools to the social model that promotes overcoming learning barriers with a more inclusive interdisciplinary approach, where most learners will remain in mainstream schools (DoE, 2002). According to EWP6 (2001), the medical model was previously used to diagnose solely for placement in a special or specialised school, whereas the social or systems approach is to identify the learner's educational needs and recommend support measures that can be made available to overcome the barriers to learning. While the medical model of disability claims that learners' impairments or differences disable them, the social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised. Thomas et al. (1997) indicated that disability is caused by the restrictions of the environment and society rather than the impairment, as these restrictions exclude people with impairments from participating in mainstream society. Thomas et al. (1997) defined impairment as the limitation of a person's physical, mental, or sensory function on a long-term basis. Impairment is a long-term characteristic within an individual, often resulting from disease, genetics, or injury. Thomas et al. (1997) contemplated that those attitudes in society can lead to the disablement of learners with impairments or barriers in society. Goodley (2001) argues for the use of the term "learning difficulties" over "impairment".

Although 'special needs' is still an acceptable term, the NCSNET (DoE, 1997) recommended that the term "special needs" be replaced with "barriers to learning", because of the possible connotations of the medical model of disability (DoE, 1997).

The Department of Education (DoE, 1997) prefers the term learning barriers to minimise possible stigma. It may also be suggested that the word “challenges” rather than the word “problems” can hedge the possible stigma of labelling children, by implying that a disability or impairment is a problem.

The medical model did not explain the possible diverse needs of the learners (Engelbrecht & Van Deventer, 2013), but was merely an identification tool for the type of disability. It also did not focus on or consider the different factors that caused diverse learning needs or why many students had been excluded during the previous education system (Engelbrecht & Van Deventer, 2013). Learners were assessed to diagnose their disability as an explanation of why they were not progressing in school. According to the diagnosis, they were then referred to the available specialised school that catered for their specific needs. These schools were often far from home and learners were then placed in hostels. This meant that they were taken away from their families and out of their communities.

The social model offers a more holistic interdisciplinary approach, whereby the focus is not on the disability or incapability of the learner (Resch et al, 2010; van Loon et al., 2013), but preferably on the different abilities of the learner with barriers to learning. The SIAS policy (DoE, 2014b) promotes the ideal outcome where the potential and all capabilities of the learner will be explored, and learning and support programmes will be recommended, enabling learners to reach their full potential. The report of the NCSNET (1997) emphasised that, through implementing the social model, the system needs to be reorganised by removing the barriers in the education system that restrict and prevent learners with disabilities from succeeding in education. The social model should, therefore, enable learners to progress in an inclusive school according to their abilities, no matter their impairment.

When IE was introduced as a new approach to education, there was confusion about whether learners may still be assessed or not, and many policymakers were sceptical about and even suspicious of assessment. The reasoning behind this was that assessment and placements of children, with its negative connotation of “labelling a child” (Chantler, 2013; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011) was frowned upon. From my experience as a psychologist in education, there was a time that psychological

assessment was negatively looked upon, and many learners were wrongly placed in special schools. Therefore, moving from a medical to a social model should not mean that assessment may not take place, but the focus will rather be on support provision than on labelling the disability.

2.5 SELECTIVE OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS IN THE INCLUSIVE SYSTEM

Inclusion began as a post-war social-political human rights movement that resulted in the UDHR in 1948, whereafter most countries pledged their commitment to fully inclusive schools. IE, as defined in the Salamanca agreement (1994), includes all children in society. Including children with disabilities in mainstream schooling was rooted in equality for all, no matter the disability, social standing, race, or gender (Ainscow, 2016; UNESCO, 2017). Ainscow et al. (2019) explained that IE was implemented to adhere to principles of educational, social and financial justification, meaning equal and quality education that benefits all in a dignified social and more cost-effective educational environment.

Inclusion started in the Nordic countries, and these can be considered forerunners with strong economic, social and equality principles in educational systems (Andriichuk, 2017). Over the years, these countries entered into numerous debates on theory, policies, legislation, and implementation, and most countries, including South Africa, seem to adapt the Northern hemisphere's policies, drawing from European countries' research theories, policies and models (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018).

After many years of inclusion practices since the first Salamanca pledge in 1994, there are still contrasting views on theories, policies and best practices of IE in the best interest of all children or an individual child. Although inclusion is well embedded (Salend, 2010; Slee, 2011) in many education systems internationally, there are many controversies (Amstrong et al., 2010; Kaufman & Badar, 2014a; Mock & Kaufman, 2002).

2.5.1 Full Inclusion

Some research supports the theory and benefits of full inclusion in all mainstream schools in support of children's rights, dignity, and in support of embracing diversity in schools and communities (Mag et al., 2017; Robinson and Goodey, 2018). Salend et al. (2012), commenting on best practices in the US, recognise that definitions and implementation of IE may differ globally; however, best practices can be contemplated that can be adapted for diverse settings to cater for all learner needs. South Africa included many of the practices outlined by Salend (2010), for example, rubrics and learner portfolios.

Mag et al. (2017) in their research in Romania, confirm that inclusion is not a privilege, but every child's right and that quality education is one of the most important factors in a person's life. They concluded by highlighting the importance of increased professional educator development as a contributing factor to a healthy society (Mag et al., 2017).

Robinson and Goodey (2018) describe long-standing resistance towards inclusion as an 'inclusion phobia' that could be seen as a disorder. In their case studies including severe to profound learning disabilities, they concluded that it is not the inclusive practices preventing full inclusion, but rather the excessive fear (inclusion phobia) of the unknown, by some educators, preventing them from fully implementing IE (Robinson & Goodey, 2018). Trussler and Robinson (2015) promote a Spiral Spectrum Model of diversity as an alternative to the normative model. Such a model offers a holistic approach without taking the norm as the point of reference but recognises diversity as a natural part of humanity and at the same time respond to the uniqueness and complexity of a learner's developmental profile.

The latest Salamanca conference in 2016 was a follow-up on progress made by IE since implementation was carried out. In this conference, there was a renewed pledge and support to all-inclusive schools, with emphasis on **all**, to include all learners regardless of differences and disabilities. Ainscow et al. (2019), in their comments on the conference, recognised the progress of it seems mostly in European countries, but

he also acknowledged the difficulties of implementation due to the complexity of inclusion.

2.5.2 Concerns About Full Inclusion

In contrast with the above views, there is also research that points to the concerns of exclusion, disadvantages, educational difficulties, educator expectations of competency levels, and possible neglect of learners with barriers in mainstream setting (Hansen, 2012; Kaufman & Badar, 2014a; Mock & Kauffman, 2002). These concerns are raised not only in developing countries but also in the Northern hemisphere where better facilities and economic advantages exist.

According to Mock and Kauffman (2002) from the University of Virginia, the inclusion viewpoint stems from a belief that children are more alike than different and therefore they can be placed in the same classroom, no matter the barrier or disability. They question the possibility that educators can be generally trained as specialists in all the disability fields, since in the medical field, this has not proved possible; therefore, there needing specialists for different speciality fields. They further reason that advocating for full inclusion constitutes a social-emotional appeal that has no basis in empirical evidence.

Cooper et al. (2011) take a biopsychosocial approach to the current inclusive system in the UK, considering the complex interactions of biological, psychological and physical factors. They comment that learners' educational experiences from school-going age till the age of eighteen have the most significant impact on a person's social and economic life opportunity. Further, they note that ineffective IE disables children and leads to negative emotional and social consequences; this can be devastating, especially for the less privileged groups that need quality education the most. Cooper et al.'s (2011) concerns are about the recent rise of special needs due to behaviour difficulties in the inclusive system and they question if IE, as currently practised, is in the best interest of learners with SEN.

Hansen (2012) from Denmark, in an article about limits to inclusion, reasons that communities decide on inclusion or exclusion usually according to their values and beliefs about the learner's ability or inability to cope in a certain setting; therefore, the limit to pedagogical practice in inclusion must be theoretically defined to be theoretically justified. Boundaries between inclusion and exclusion must be continuously challenged to create opportunities for all learners.

Kaufman and Badar (2014a), education specialists from the University of Virginia in the US, taking an alternative view where they reason that instruction, not inclusion, should be the foremost and the most significant driver to special education. Kaufman and Badar (2014b) state that better thinking and clearer communication will help special education distinguish between and value all kinds of diversities like skin colour, sexual orientation, race, nationality, and disability. Disabilities however are different from these other diversities in the consequential educational outcomes of instruction that needs to be measured in achieved abilities and added value to the individual, rather than general moral beliefs on what might be best for learners (Kaufman & Bader 2014b). All differences and disabilities are not the same and cannot be treated as if there is one remedy for all; if so, this will contribute to the neglect of learners (Kaufman and Badar, 2014a).

Palikara et al. (2019), in the study on the implementation of the policy for special education in England, expressed concerns about the break in continuity between political ideology and service provision that hamper smooth integration and service provision. Constraints such as budget cuts, challenges in collaboration between agencies and tight timelines result in the fragmental implementation of policy.

Nilholm (2020), in a recent research study in Sweden, including two case studies, one at school level and the other at classroom level on how to change theories to improve practice in IE, is concerned that theory development is broad and there is an absence of a theory that proves to be empirically successful in the development of more inclusive schools. According to Nilholm (2020), advancements have been made in IE, but current theories need examining as they seem to lack the ability to develop successful inclusive schools, being too far removed from practice. There still appear to be both segregated practices and a need for more knowledge on best inclusive

practices, with few advancements made in inclusion. Therefore, it seems that the absence of knowledge grounded in research and practice on the correct way to drive the inclusive system successfully complicates practice. Nilholm (2020) warns that researchers should take care not to arrive at universal inclusive theories but rather give a certain system a set of events and actions that will be beneficial for inclusion.

In developing countries policies, curriculum challenges, lack of resources and educator training still seem to continue after many years of implementing IE, as confirmed in a recent study conducted in Namibia by Mokaleng and Möwes (2020). They researched issues affecting the implementation of IE practices in the Omaheke region with schoolteachers. Their study concludes that many difficulties including inappropriate policy development, lack of resources and support, curriculum challenges and lack of teacher training contribute to the challenges of implementing IE.

2.5.3 Complexities and Dilemmas

More research evidence is coming forward in some countries which argues that the current inclusive system is difficult to achieve because of the complexity (e.g. Armstrong et al., 2009) and of different interpretations and perspectives (Norwich, 2013b) of IE.

Armstrong et al. (2009) from the University of Sydney reason in their book on international policy and practice in IE, that IE is a fashion evident in leading social visionary trends, which seem to be interpreted as the new name for special education. Developing countries' government policies are influenced by perspectives from developed economic affluent countries. However, IE presents a complex picture in developing countries as these countries start with a post-colonial economic disadvantage with higher poverty levels, shortage of resources and poor health care. The authors therefore argue that unless local contexts are considered IE will remain an ideal.

Norwich (2013a), professor in educational psychology at the University of Exeter, in his book on tensions and dilemmas in IE, addresses the strong ethical appeal of equal education, leading to a dilemma in the practical realisation of IE and of the capability approach for learners with special educational needs, especially those with disabilities. Tensions develop because of different perspectives when dealing with the complex needs and issues around these learners, in a system that has a broad scope. His concerns include the extent of a set of universal educational capabilities; the tensions between individual participation and centrally regulated state control; and the dilemma of the equity approach in meeting the preferences of parents and children in individual school choice (Norwich, 2013b).

Hornby (2015) from Plymouth University in the UK, in his article on development of a new theory for the education of children with special educational needs and disabilities, echoes Armstrong et al.'s (2009) viewpoints on policies and suggests that full inclusion of LSEN in mainstream schools is "impossible to achieve" (Hornby, 2015, p. 236) in practice with current theories and policies. His viewpoint is also supported by some other researchers that reason that the diversity of interpretations on inclusion, as influenced by different values of countries and communities, complicate practice (e.g., Nilholm & Gorhansson, 2017).

Hornby (2015) suggests that countries need to look at a new version of inclusion for children with special educational needs and disabilities, where the values and practices of IE are combined with the intervention strategies of special education, in order to design a new IE theory.

In an US study from Arizona University, Artiles and Kozleski (2016) in their research on IE's promises and trajectories, mirror these views on complexity and focus further on the contradictions in the inclusive mandate. These authors argue that the inclusive mandate is for all learners, though studies focus mostly on the disabled. The authors' concern is about the few studies conducted on the impact of the inclusive system, leading to tension between LSEN and typical peers. An argument can be made that typical peers may run the risk of being disadvantaged because of the emphasis on learners with SEN in the classroom taking up too much of the educator's time (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016).

Murungi (2015) argues in the study on issues in the conceptualisation and implementation of IE in South Africa that the concepts of inclusion and integration do not necessarily mean the same thing. When looking at the interpretation of the CRPD Article 24 (2) (d) and (e), children should have the option of choosing their school, meaning between a mainstream and special school; therefore, all schools must offer quality education.

2.5.4 Nordic and Countries of the Global North

Although there are some differences in education organisation amongst the Nordic countries (Lundahl, 2016), researchers speak of a Nordic model. Schools in these countries have equal free education, and private schools in Sweden and Finland are fully tax-subsidised. All children have free health care, psychological services and special education support if needed (Antikainen, 2010; Lundahl, 2016). There are many educational options and, according to Lundahl (2016), there are more than 560 educational programmes to choose from in Sweden's urban areas. These countries are well known as financially affluent, with high-quality schools, even before inclusion as a political drive existed. Therefore, the prediction beforehand would be that implementation of inclusion in these countries would be more likely to succeed than in developing countries, with their much more limited resources.

Although almost all countries pledged their commitment to a fully IE system, it seems that even countries that are regarded as the social-democratic forerunners in inclusion (Lundahl, 2016) – like Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and countries of the Global North – experience several challenges.

A study done by Biamba (2016) in Sweden suggested that political, social and economic constraints taxed the smooth integration of all learners, but asserted that parents and educators could work together to ensure equivalent Education. Schools were willing to accommodate special educational needs (SEN) children but found it challenging to help them belong and participate. Sweden moved from a one-track approach, where almost all learners attended mainstream schools, to a multi-track

approach, like England, with multiple approaches and services available between mainstream and SEN (Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2020).

According to Lundahl (2016), several changes in the Nordic countries happened after the Swedish government allowed free schools to earn profits. These free schools are mostly owned by companies, and there is a high level of competition to access them. As parents may choose the best school for their children, it seems that most middle-class parents moved their children to highly functioning schools, and away from lower socioeconomic schools. Therefore, the initial imperative of inclusion may not be realised. According to Lundahl (2016), statistics showed that, after the 1990s, an increasing number of special needs learners in Sweden prefer individual or small group education, apart from school. Furthermore, several schools for highly talented learners started, and this move might implicate more diversity and segregation of groups.

Verenikina (2008), from Wollongong University Australia, in the book on exploring learning for new times, argued that general attitudes in Europe were positive towards inclusion, and there were great efforts to increase the number of educators. Rieser (2012) confirmed that at least 20 Northern countries have more than doubled their number of educators.

However, despite efforts and successes in Northern countries, several challenges remain. A more recent factor that needs to be considered is high immigration into European countries, especially to the wealthier countries, where a definite disadvantage for immigrant children is found (Malmusi et al., 2017). Lundhal (2016) also shares these concerns about the impact of immigration into Nordic countries, possibly influencing quality education for all.

Ainscow (2020), in a recent study on lessons learned from international experience on promoting inclusion, supports a whole school approach and contemplates clear policies and definitions that are drawn from all stakeholders involved with children. He also emphasises that education departments should take the lead.

Although several challenges remain, the Nordic countries have seemingly made considerable progress and are more successful, as the forerunners of inclusive education. These countries provide many educational options and programmes for learners to succeed in IE. In summary, it seems that inclusive education is more sustainable in countries where governments and education departments work together in close partnership and provide sound leadership.

2.5.5 The UK and English speaking Countries

There are several structures for learners with special needs in the UK that range from integration – that is, units within mainstream schools, to special schools linked with mainstream schools, and the option of special school placement (O’Hanlon, 2016). Williams-Brown and Hodkinson (2020) distinguish between locational and functional integration. Locational integration refers to a separate unit for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) learners within the school but includes social integration with their peers on the playground. Functional integration is where SEND learners are integrated into the mainstream classroom.

Although most children in England are placed in mainstream schools, there is also a two-track approach where some children with special needs are placed in special schools and are not following the mainstream curriculum (Clay, 2014). Although parents have the choice of mainstream or special school placement for their children, the decision on the correct placement of the SEND children depends heavily on the identification and assessment of the child, according to certain standards objectives that either include or exclude them (Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2020). Therefore, Williams-Brown and Hodkinson (2020), in their study on the development of IE in England, argue that systems have not changed significantly in the last fifteen years. They reason that inclusion is still mostly about integrating children with disabilities and not focussing on the broader meaning of inclusion for all.

Van Herwegen et al. (2019) in their research in England on views of professionals about the educational needs of children with neurodevelopmental disorders mention that the Education Health Care (EHC) plans replaced SEN statements to ensure multi-agency holistic service provision between health care and education. The study finds

that professionals believe children with neurodevelopmental disorders would find it difficult to cope in ordinary schools. Another finding is that systematic training and clear guidance for professionals are needed for smooth integration.

The educator training programmes in Canada, which is considered one of the leading countries in IE, do not provide adequate training in learners with disabilities; therefore, educators struggle with the application of inclusive teaching and find the education of learners with high educational needs challenging (McCrimmon, 2015). Bunch (2015) argues that the struggle between jurisdictions and educators wanting to keep the special education model, and those who recognise the IE model as fully inclusive in the mainstream, are confusing, and this complicates matters of inclusion in Canada. The majority of provinces in Canada value inclusion as a part of a system where all learners are not necessarily placed in mainstream classrooms, but also have the option of continuing in the special education model (Bunch, 2015).

Although Australia has a curriculum that provides a set of outcomes to all learners (Anderson & Boyle, 2015), some challenges remain due to different interpretations and applications of IE in the eight educational jurisdictions. Anderson and Boyle (2015) believe that this leads to inconsistent levels of educational outcomes for learners.

In New Zealand, Selvaraj (2015) reasons that neoliberal ideological policies during the period between the late eighties up to 2013 were not beneficial for learners with special educational needs, and this worked against the introduced progressive education policies there. According to her, New Zealand still struggles with interpreting and implementing its current policy of inclusion (Selvaraj, 2016). She argues that, despite the paradigm shift to inclusion, policies continue to be based on traditional structures, especially for children traditionally known as having special educational needs.

Although many Eastern European countries lack the public will, professional capacity, funding, infrastructure and internal mechanisms required for successful implementation (Johnstone et al., 2019), the Northern countries continue to progress in their attempts to realise IE. Walton (2018) distils from research that the Nordic

countries and other countries of the Global North, fare better in realising inclusion than the Southern countries.

Tiernan (2021) in a study in Ireland, explains that the direction of inclusive must be carefully considered taking into account the country in itself and what is possible for the country to provide.

Some research argues that inclusion is a fashionable hype due to current trends happening worldwide (Armstrong et al., 2010). Currently, in the USA, the discussion on 'woke' pedagogy as part of the curriculum in IE appears to lead to tension in some schools and communities. For example in February 2021, legislators voted in favour of enacting Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Standards in the state of Illinois's educator education programmes (Korte, 2021).

Caldera (2018) argues that "woke" pedagogy should be introduced to acknowledge the socio-political context of students' lived experiences that shape their worlds; this would be aimed to prevent any discriminatory factors, for example, racism, classism, gender bias, and ethnic factors. Another group argues against woke teaching in schools, as they feel it might be harmful to learners. McDonald (2021) reasons that woke theories entail politically motivating concepts that are forced on learners and schools. An article on woke classrooms by McDonald (2021) contemplates that it will be less harmful if parents, whether they value liberalism or critical theory, are free to choose different educational options for their children.

2.5.6 Developing Countries of the Global South

According to Reiser (2012), developing countries experience numerous challenges in implementing quality inclusive practices. Although more learners are enrolled in schools, the proportion of disabled out-of-school learners are high. The estimated number of disabled learners in school is less than ten per cent and the number completing primary education is less than one per cent. Reasons for difficulties in successfully implementing the IE model in these countries include negative attitudes from parents and educators, poverty, lack of accessible schools, long distances to

school, lack of infrastructure, funding, professional capacity, and lack of adequately trained educators (Johnstone et al., 2019; Rieser, 2012).

Developing countries like India, with vast rural areas in comparison with South Africa, and with a heterogeneous population and high rates of poverty, seem to experience similar challenges. These include a lack of resources, large classrooms, unskilled educators, and under-resourced professional health support in state schools (Seedat, 2018; Tiwari et al., 2015). All these challenges contribute to a high learner fall-out rate, while private schools with financial and parental support succeed (Seedat, 2018; Tiwari et al., 2015).

In countries of the Global South, government motivation for inclusion started as a human rights and social-political imperative, promoting equality without discrimination. However, democracy in developing countries, including South Africa, did not automatically change historical inequalities (Werning et al., 2016). The realities of the economic situations in these countries do not necessarily correspond with the socio-political aspirations. Therefore, perhaps there is a need for inclusive theories, structures and policies to be implemented according to the economic and social values of the country, rather than following international trends blindly. Werning et al. (2016, p.7) state “indiscriminate policy transference has significant intended and unintended consequences, especially when the realities of educational governance, resourcing and broader sociocultural dynamics are different”. Werning et al. (2016, p.8) continue:

... inclusive education must be regarded as a series of continua rather than a single absolute with only one international configuration. Efforts towards the inclusion of all children should be supported through a range of pedagogical and structural practices. It is not simply about upskilling educators, but also about providing support in terms of human and learning resources across different sectors.

Michel (2018) in research in Ivorian schools on didactic use of representations and learning styles for learner engagement, mirrors the views of Werning et al. (2016) and emphasises that many learners are not succeeding in the inclusive system and mainstream schools, in the current system. He pleads for revolutionary transformation in education to cater for the increasing diversity of learners throughout the globe.

Although developing countries experience many challenges there are also positive developments in realising inclusive education. A study completed in Zimbabwe by Chireshe (2013) concluded that inclusive education reduced the stigmatisation of disabled children. They also experienced more positive attitudes amongst the learners without disabilities. Inclusion led to better acceptance and socialisation in the communities.

A recent study by Pather (2019) explored IE in Africa within the framework of cultural diversities and also taking into account the influences of colonial European powers. Although Pather acknowledges systemic and attitudinal challenges, she highlights the positives and progress of IE, such as reported higher school enrolment and the increased support of international NGOs in several African countries. She further acknowledges the positive influences of international agencies working with local stakeholders facing local challenges and increasing learning opportunities by mainstreaming inclusion policies.

2.5.7 South Africa

In South Africa, a country with 11 official languages, diverse cultures, values, and norms, with a very high unemployment rate (Amnesty International, 2020), and where inequalities between rural and urban communities are evident, the complexity of providing quality IE for all learners cannot be overstated. Although new theories and policies are continuously provided, several studies reflect the difficulties of implementing and providing sustainable inclusive practices in South Africa (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2019; Seedat, 2018); these are even more evident in rural communities (Heeralal et al., 2014; Mahlo, 2017a; McConnachie, 2013). The gap between policy and implementing sustainable practice remains, even after many years of inclusion (Seedat, 2018).

Seedat (2018) reviewed the inclusive research in South Africa and looked at the state and progress of the inclusive system since its implementation in 2001. He concluded that, although attitudes towards inclusion are more positive, the gap between policy and practice remains. The main concerns are the perception of educators that they are not sufficiently skilled to cater for the diverse needs, and the confusion between diversity and disability remains. Curriculum challenges, overcrowded classrooms, insignificant parent support, lack of resources and support remain major obstacles to implementing IE. The elevated stress levels of educators is a concern, and many educators continue to believe that learners experiencing barriers would be better situated in an environment that could cater for their needs.

McConnachie's (2013) study, completed in the Eastern Cape on educators' understanding of implementing IE, highlights the difficulties of implementing EWP6 and the SIAS policy that was then still in a draft format. The lack of support and meaningful advocacy on the implementation of IE seemed to be one of the main problems. Cultural and societal issues, and the high rate of learners with FASD, also contributed to challenges experienced by educators.

Donohue and Bornman (2014), in a study on the challenges of realising IE in South Africa, argue that the enigmatic or vague policy cannot be realised in practice. Challenges were evident in an older educator workforce not trained in inclusive strategies, some intolerant traditional cultural beliefs on disabilities, and learners with disabilities not attending schools. The belief, on the part of educators, that learners would be better off in special schools was evident.

Several research studies confirm that the Eastern Cape fails to provide quality education to its learners and leaves them with a gross violation of their basic human rights to education (Amnesty International, 2020; Ntanjana, 2013). Ntanjana (2013) researched in South Africa the ability of the state to deal with Eastern Cape education to serve children's rights. The findings concluded that the state's indisposition to deal with Eastern Cape education is a continuous violation of children's rights. Ntanjana's (2013) findings is also echoed in the research of Bulimo (2018), on the South African Human Rights Commission's role in the promotion, protection and monitoring the right to education in South Africa. Bulimo (2018) concludes that education in the Eastern Cape, from contextual factors to the insufficient number of educators and professional

support services, violates the rights of learners, which also leads to many consequential violations of future human rights.

Heeralal et al. (2014) completed a study on the implementation of IE in three schools in the Mthatha area of the Eastern Cape. Their findings support the previous research showing that policies do not support the implementation of inclusive practices where multiple challenges exist. The main difficulties of implementing inclusive strategies were the lack of resources, support from education departments and lack of skilled educators.

Mahlo (2017b) completed a study on the diverse needs of foundation-phase learners in Gauteng and concluded that, although educators embraced the values of the inclusive system, implementing the system had too many challenges; these were mainly due to a lack of support systems to fully implement and adhere to theory and policy. Those challenges stem from a lack of educator support, and lack of parental and community support due to socio-economic and cultural challenges, as well as educator beliefs that they are not adequately trained to deal with the diverse needs of learners in overcrowded classrooms.

Engelbrecht (2019) research on international expectations of IE versus the realities in South Africa questions South Africa's policymakers on the strong dependency of the inclusive model "imported" from high-income countries. Engelbrecht explains that successful implementation of IE at the micro- meso- and macro levels depend on the societal attitudes towards diversity; these include cultural beliefs and values on disabilities in the specific community, as well as the socio-economic status of the community. Inclusion is a complex issue, where all the unique cultural, historical, and economical factors are imperative to consider when designing a successful inclusive system in South Africa.

While South Africa is grappling with sustainable practices to adhere to the diversity of learner needs, discussions around the decolonisation of education in South Africa are increasing (Engelbrecht et al, 2016; Mahlo, 2017a; Walton, 2018). The reasons for these discussions derive from the history of colonialism, educational exclusion (Walton, 2018) and oppression (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013) in countries of the Global

South. These seem to be being replaced with neocolonial idealistic viewpoints, an “evangelical belief” (Amstrong et al., 2011, p. 33) from the Global North that is not sustainable in the Global South, where most countries experience challenges in providing basic quality education. The coloniality of knowledge that drives IE mainly derived from Western ideologies (Walton, 2016), where all the representative board members are from European countries. This might not be in the best interest of South African learners, with very different social-economic circumstances than the Global North. The latest report from Amnesty International (2020) portrays a bleak picture of the inclusive situation in South Africa and especially in the Eastern Cape, where contextual factors, corruption, poor socio-economic circumstances and a shortage of resources remain a challenge impacting the basic human rights of learners.

As noted in chapter one poverty trends (STATS SA, 2017) reported that the Eastern Cape remains the poorest province, where 36% of households’ primary income is from social grants; this province has and the highest percentage of households receiving a child support grant, and 12.7% of households are declared multi-dimensional poor. The Daily Dispatch on 23 August 2017 recorded that Statistician-General Pali Lehohla believes that upliftment can only succeed through proper education. Although Lehola (STATS SA, 2017) recognised the importance of support and upliftment through education, this province remains one of the provinces with the highest FASD (McConnachie, 2013), with a shortage of professional support services and many schools understaffed and without remedial educators. Lehola (2017) echoed Wright (2012) and believes that the apartheid history has burdened South Africa, in particular the African population, where the uneven consequences are most evident in remote rural areas. The post-apartheid drive to reform education leads to idealistic theories, complex policies and implementation documents, that, however, fail to meet realities in schools (Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Sayed, 2010; Wright, 2012). This is most evident in rural schools where the dilapidated education system is not well-developed enough to respond to these complex procedural requirements (Wright, 2012), and educators were not appropriately trained on the expectations of the new educational philosophies.

Improved educator development remains one of the core needs indicated by educators, as reflected in several research studies. Wright (2012) emphasises that the neglect of educators' own educational needs, and failure to provide enrichment programmes, remains the core of failing education in the Eastern Cape and South Africa, as a whole. The dire need for highly skilled educators becomes clear when looking into the many challenges related to the diversity of learner needs. The recent statistics from the Eastern Cape (Amnesty International, 2020) showed that 85% of 9-year-old learners cannot read with comprehension. This is further complicated by the current existence in many schools, of at least 10% of learners' home language differs from the LoLT.

A contributing factor to social and educational challenges and inequalities stems from corruption in government (Amnesty International, 2020). The Zondo Commission on State Capture and Corruption started in 2018 and continues to highlight the level of damage done by corruption, to an already socio-economically unequal country. The Eastern Cape also seems to be identified in ongoing allegations of corruption and mismanagement of funds. Mismanagement and corruption deprive the province and schools of infrastructure, sanitation and necessities, and resources to manage a safe and healthy school environment (Bateman, 2013; Hollands, 2007).

The integration of a combination of factors, starting with basic infrastructure and resources, and ending with enough adequately trained educators and human support services, all play a role in the outcomes related to the quality of education. Without solid management practices and carefully planned use of finances that meet the requirements of IE, it seems that the task of supporting all learners' needs, without discrimination, could be overwhelming.

2.6 CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN THE INCLUSIVE SYSTEM

The inclusive classroom should be a space where learners feel safe and secure to explore their environment (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009). Learners can only develop and reach their full potential in a suitable environment that acts in the best interest of the child, where all domains of development are stimulated, and the learner's human rights

are not violated. When asking the question of what environment will benefit the learner, this research looked at the following aspects: firstly, child development including nature and nurture and, secondly, what provision must be made by the education system to act in the best interests of children, encouraging them as dignified human beings to reach their full potential.

2.6.1 Child Development Theories

To answer the key questions posed by this study, there is a need to look at childhood development in relation to the education offered to learners according to their developmental stages.

There are different theories around child development and the relationship between nature and genetic factors versus nurture and environmental influences (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Hall, 1996) in the development of the child. Current theories admit the contribution and interplay between both nature and nurture over time (Berk, 2006). The different developmental theories that emerged over a period of time represent different ideas that all contributed to the understanding of children's physical and psychological growth, determined by genes, interactions with each other and the environment today (Berk, 2009; Shute & Slee, 2015). For this constructivist research study, Vygotsky's social development theory, together with Bronfenbrenner's ecosystems model, will be used as a basis.

Vygotsky's (1962) social-cultural theory, where learning is the construction of knowledge through social negotiation, has widely influenced the field of IE. Children construct their world based on the contexts in which they grow up. This will include language, culture, and their social environment, with aim of reaching their zones of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), where the child will progress developmentally with the help of an adult and/or capable peers. When the learner has achieved the required skills, the ZPD moves forward. Vygotsky (1978) explained in his theory the importance of the presence of someone with the knowledge and skills to guide the learner. This guidance, provided through supportive activities (scaffolding) by the educator, will guide the learner through the ZPD. Tudge (1992b) explained that more knowledgeable peers can also guide the learner. This may mean that the learner

with barriers to learning might also gain knowledge from their peer group in an inclusive classroom.

Holistic education resonates with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Eloff & Swart, 2018), where learning takes place while interacting with others such as educators, parents, and peers in their cultural context. Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the influence of adult educators and more skilled peers in the learning experience, development, and behaviour of a child. Vygotsky (1978, p. 90) stated: "Learning is not development; however, properly organised learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning". This statement indicates that the process of learning and development are interlinked and without learning, development cannot take place. For holistic development to take place a child's avenues of learning must be understood, including a specific child in a specific family within their belief systems, social, and moral contexts (Hardman, 2012).

Vygotsky (1978) believed that the best learning can only occur when the learner is in the zone of proximal development. His sociocultural theory also suggested that parents, caregivers, peers and the culture at large are responsible for developing higher-order functions. This theory indicates that children's minds need constant interaction with their social worlds. By doing things together and with others, learners gain experience that forms cultural tools that help the child develop competence in society (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991).

These approaches emphasise that LSEN will only benefit holistically from the learning experience if positive interactions, according to their needs, take place between the educator, more skilled peers and the community in which they grow up. Holistic education is structured to address the needs of individual learners, promote positive relationships and nurture social, physical, emotional and creative development (Moodley & Moodley, 2018).

2.6.2 The Eco-systemic Model

As educational theorists preferred to move from a medical to a social model (Rieser & Mason, 1992), the IE model can be integrated with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and the social-cultural theory of Vygotsky, which resonate in an holistic approach. The ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the learner with barriers to learning. In contrast to the medical model, the ecological systems approach makes provision for the understanding of the learner within a broader social context of family, school, friends and community influences; that all shape and influence the learner's development and their life in general (Santrock, 2007).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, pp. 923–924), the definition of a system is “a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network, a complex whole”. Systems are typified by “synergy” where the whole system is referred to as the supra-system and this functions in relation to the subsystems. In the social sciences, a system describes the working of an organisation as a whole and it is understood that there are various ways to reach a goal. Von Bertalanffy (1973) described general systems theory as a cross-disciplinary conceptual approach that introduced basic ideas as a foundation to the field being developed to inform research. Miller (1978) developed it further with his living systems theory (LST), where multiple systems and subsystems interact (Miller & Miller, 1995). Changes in the subsystems of an organisation may directly or indirectly influence other parts of the system that impact the whole system or organisation (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The ecological-systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes human development as a complex multilevel system, with levels nested into each other, where each level directly or indirectly influences the development of a human being. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eco-systems model underwrites and explains the systems of social influences on the development of children. Therefore, the development of a child in school will be influenced across multiple systems, namely the *microsystem*, which presents the direct interaction between the child in the classroom with peers and the educator. The *mesosystem* shows the interaction that concern the child between role-players in the system, for example between the educator, school and district office.

The *exosystem* and *macrosystem* influence the learner indirectly through the policies and regulations in the system. Bronfenbrenner's theory later developed into a bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1989), where the individual's role became more important and formed the centre of the environment. The *chronosystem* developed in the biological model to describe the integration between the systems and the influence on the individual thereof over time, to form a five systems theory.

Ultimately, the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model was introduced (Rosa & Tudge, 2013), and this provides a framework and insights that can explain the importance of the holistic approach on all levels when considering learners with SEN. Rosa and Tudge (2013) explained that Bronfenbrenner's theory developed over three stages, from the ecological model (1973-1979) to the bio-ecological model, where the second phase (1980-1993) emphasised the role of the individual at the centre of the environment. The third phase (1993-2006) recognised the proximal processes over time, and the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model was thus presented. Neal and Neal (2013), however, proposed the need for further development on Bronfenbrenner's theory, called the networked theory. Previous researched often used only the nested system, that is, the first stage of his theory, and overlooked the importance of the interaction between the levels of the networked system and the influence of developments over time.

For the purposes of this study, firstly, the basic constructs of the system will be described and then, secondly, the need for developing a networked system that may better cater for learners' needs in the inclusive system. In describing the nested system, the microsystem is the most influential and represents the interpersonal relations of the child. It is the environmental setting in which the child lives, including the immediate family members, school, peers, and the surrounding neighbourhood where the child grows up. The interaction and relationships between the groups and the child will have a direct influence on the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) also suggest that the child plays an active role in constructing these relationships. Therefore, the importance of a positive learning experience for learners entering the formal school system in Grade one must be highlighted, especially for learners with special educational needs who might already have had some challenging experiences in their earlier developmental years.

The next level, termed the mesosystem, describes the interactions between microsystems, or the people in the different settings in a child's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Here we find the relationships between parents or family members and the school, including the educators and peer group. This means that, because the levels are nested in each other, all interactions in the different levels will influence the experience of the child in the system, and that will be evident in later behaviour. For example, if the learners with barriers to learning feel rejected or ignored in class, this may influence their self-esteem and the forming of positive future relationships with others that will be evident in the chronosystem. For example, if the learners feel humiliated in class by the educator or their peers, they may resort to bullying strategies.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the exosystem represents the settings where the child has no active or direct control, but may be indirectly influenced by certain aspects of provisioning for the child. The exosystem presents a broader range of interaction with other people and places, not necessarily through direct interaction, but this still influences the development of the child. This can include the neighbourhood, extended family, parents' workplace, and the broader society. This will mean that the construct and status of, for instance, the municipality in the neighbourhood and the surrounding social culture will impact learners' development. The parents' external experiences will also influence the development of the child. In the education system, the policies and regulations pertaining to inclusive schools will be monitored by district offices. If this implementation of the policies is not beneficial to learners with barriers to learning, these children may not reach their full potential. When considering Vygotsky's and Bronfenbrenner's theories, the social welfare of a child in school and the community is important for proximal development. For example, if there is poor communication, interaction and networks between the DoE, the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the community, the learner might not benefit from IE.

The macrosystem describes aspects of the national cultural setting, while the chronosystem relates to the socio-historical influences on the child (Santrock, 2007). The macrosystem includes all things pertaining to a child that indirectly have a significant influence on the child. This will include the cultural and moral values of

society, government policies, the economics of a country and anything else that may indirectly influence the child's progress and development. For example, the socio-economic status of a country and municipalities plays an immense role in what is offered to a child with barriers to learning. Policies and decisions made by the DoE and the DSD on the national level might play a significant role in the scholastic and social development of learners with barriers. For example, a policy that includes all learners with barriers in mainstream schools without providing remedial educators in those schools might influence those learners' scholastic progress. When the DSD does not provide sufficient programmes to manage, for example, alcohol abuse in rural communities, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder might be prevalent, and that will, in turn, contribute to high numbers of learners with barriers to learning in schools.

The chronosystem relates to the patterning of environmental events and socio-historical circumstances and their influences on the child over time (Santrock, 2007). Therefore, this speaks to the child's development over time as influenced by the interaction between all the systems that predict the developmental outcome of the person in society (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). When, for example, the educational system goes through numerous transitions throughout the learner's school career (e.g., multiple changes of the curriculum), this will affect the outcome of the learners' development over time. All these levels play a part in the learner's educational domain and cannot be seen as separated entities.

Phelan (2004) explains that a systems viewpoint prevents us from seeing a person in isolation and encourages us to understand the factors that reinforce our behaviour and patterns of interaction. This means that the learners in the classroom should not be seen in isolation, but rather as part of their cultural environments, their households, and the society in which they grow up. Bronfenbrenner's framework allows for the development of the system as well as the development of individuals in the system (Singal, 2006). IE in the eco-systems model will, therefore, allow the learner with barriers to learning to explore and interact in the interconnected systems. This will allow these learners to be influenced and shaped by the social and educational environment in their communities. This model places treatment externally and acknowledges that environmental changes can provide amelioration of various emotional and behavioural challenges (Warren, 2005).

The third stage of development of Bronfenbrenner's model, described as the PPCT phase (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), relates to the process-person-context-time model and the transition over time. The process relates to the processes that the person engages in and that take place in the person's environment. The person relates to all persons involved with their different personalities and characteristics. A group of psychologists used Simmel's notion of intersecting social circles (Levine et al., 1976), and Bronfenbrenner's social networks to develop a networked ecological systems theory (EST) model. This model emphasises the overlapping of ecological systems and the direct or indirect connection between structures through the direct or indirect interaction of the participants (Neal & Neal, 2013). Neal and Neal (2013) further reason that, although EST highlights the importance of multilevel systems, the exact interconnecting of systems and the influence through the direct or indirect connection on the individual over time, stay elusive. Neal and Neal (2013), therefore, suggested that ecological systems should be envisaged as networked. These ideas are explored further in Chapter 8.

2.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL YEARS

There is ample research supporting, beyond question, the importance of early childhood development (ECD). The early developmental years of life are critical for the establishment of cognitive, social-emotional, and regulatory skills and competencies for adaptation and functioning through later life (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

In the South African 2015/16 yearbook (Republic of South Africa, 2015/2016) on ECD, the NDP underlined the need for access for all children to at least two years of pre-school education, in order to increase literacy levels and overcome the inequalities of the past. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children under four years started in registered ECD centres in January 2015. The South African government committed to making R1.4 billion available in support of ECD programmes for the following two years (Republic of South Africa, 2015/2016). It seemed, though, that not all provinces succeeded in the roll-out programmes. One of the reasons might have been that ECD fell under the DSD and not the DBE. However, at the 5th ANC national

policy conference in July 2017, the Minister of Education announced that ECD centres should fall under education, but this change has not been made up until now.

In the Eastern Cape, according to the household survey of 2017 (STATS SA, 2017), 36% of children were still not attending any pre-school programme. This means that almost half of the group of learners entering Grade one had not previously been introduced to learning programmes. Together with this fact, in the same survey on parent involvement in learning, 43% of parents or guardians did not realise the importance of reading and storytelling to their children. For the learners who are already experiencing deficits in their development, these aspects may have devastating consequences, if no further intervention takes place.

When entering the formal education programme, it is expected that learners will be school-ready. The curriculum is therefore designed for formal education and does not necessarily provide for learners not having attended pre-school. The educator may end up with 40 Grade 1 learners in a class of whom at least half are not school ready and often with learners experiencing multiple barriers to learning in the same class. This makes it a daunting task for one educator to provide quality education for all in an overcrowded classroom. During President Ramaphosa's 2019 State of the Nation speech, he prioritised early childhood development and compulsory two-year pre-schooling. He stated the importance of the pre-school programme to equip children to succeed in education and help them overcome poverty and unemployment. Currently, there appear to be few gains made in this regard in the Eastern Cape.

2.8 SUMMARY

The challenges in the field of policy and practice remain a barrier in the machinery of smooth integration of a truly inclusive system. Adding poor infrastructure and shortages of human and other resources mostly due to financial difficulties, it seems that South Africa as a country needs to re-visit its strategies, to serve the human and developmental rights of learners in our Inclusive System.

CHAPTER 3: GRADE ONE LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE INCLUSIVE SYSTEM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of early childhood development (Singh & Anekar, 2018), including the importance of teaching and development in the foundation phase, has been thoroughly researched over the years (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Gravett et al.; 2009; Murray, 2018). Developmental challenges can be emotional, social, cultural, cognitive, physical, or financial; and related to lack of parental involvement, health-related barriers, or barriers in the academic system (systemic barriers). As learners enter the formal school system, they are introduced to a micro-environment where the educator and peer group play an increasingly important role in their emotional, social, and cognitive development. During this stage, learners seek approval and are starting to recognise differences, successes, and failures (Bastable, & Dart, 2007).

Learning barriers can compound all the factors that hinder learning. The learner may have multiple barriers; for example, a child with a physical disability in a low-income family may also present with FASD and experience a language barrier in school due to LoLT. Learners with barriers to learning will most likely experience developmental delays or challenges in some areas that need to be accommodated and stimulated (Adelman & Taylor, 2017) in class. The inclusive classroom needs to accommodate the child and not vice versa; therefore, the educator needs to familiarise him- or herself with the developmental history and functioning of each learner.

3.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AS A PREPARATION FOR GRADE 1

Research confirms that addressing the early childhood developmental needs of children benefits them substantially (Castro-Kemp et al., 2021, Shin et al., 2019). In preparation for formal schooling, it is imperative to stimulate children from birth onwards (Heckman, 2006). Developing the knowledge and skills to succeed in formal schooling starts at pre-school, as there is a correlation between the skills at school entry and future literacy achievements (Snow, 2006). Duncan et al. (2007) highlight

the importance of cognitive development, while Diamond (2010) goes further and emphasises the importance of the role that families and communities play in the child's personal and social development, in preparing the child holistically for school. A recent study conducted by Pan et al. (2019) agrees with Diamond's (2010) whole child approach and found that the combination of school readiness in six domains namely: language and literacy development, cognitive development, approaches to learning, self-regulating skills as well as health and social-emotional development, influence later developmental growth and success. The benefits of attending pre-school for children in the lower socio-economic group to close the gap with children in more affluent groups is highlighted by Magnuson and Waldfogel (2016).

The latest General Household Survey (GHS) in South Africa, held in 2017 (Statistics SA, 2017), showed that 47.6% of children never read a book with a parent or guardian and 44,7% never drew with their parents or guardians. According to the survey, some parents and guardians reported that they named different things (46.2%), counted (39.2%), and talked about things (38.3%) with their children (Statistics SA, 2017). That means that more than half of our children countrywide do not receive the stimulation that is needed for optimal development and preparation for formal schooling. In the Planning Commission's (NPC), Diagnostic Report (National Planning Commission, 2011), the SA government admitted that there are shortcomings in early childhood development, and these needed to be prioritised. Yet, as discussed previously, formal schooling may start at age five, if learners turn six before the end of June, regardless of whether or not the learner attended pre-school, whilst the Grade 1 curriculum seems to be designed with the assumption that all learners attended a Grade R pre-school year. This will be discussed later in this study.

Most developmental researchers agree that the window period of the first two years (Karakochuk et al., 2017), up until seven years (Sylva, 2010), and not older than twelve years, is critical for growth and development in children. Some will even claim that little can be changed after this critical window period, where later or no intervention often leads to lifetime consequences (Singh & Anekar, 2018). South Africa has made progress in prioritising and promoting early childhood development (ECD) programmes by making the programmes available at day-care centres, crèches, playgroups, nursery schools and pre-primary schools (Statistics SA, 2017). Although

programmes are available, according to the aforementioned GHS, less than half of children attended day-care outside of their homes (with 42.8% of SA children aged 0–4 years attending day-care or educational facilities outside of their homes). Statistics, according to provinces, differ. In the Eastern Cape, 60.4% of children were reportedly kept at home with parents or other guardians. The percentage of persons aged five years and older who attended early childhood educational institutions in the Eastern Cape is only 2.5% (Statistics SA, 2017). The Eastern Cape, according to the GHS, is also a province where unemployment is high (Statistics SA, 2017), and when considering these statistics, it is possible that parents or guardians of children often themselves have limited literacy. Therefore, young children need to be able to benefit from pre-school placement, where early childhood developmental programmes could contribute by preparing the learner for formal schooling.

A survey on the type and level of diversity that educators face in classrooms was done by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013). The following results were reported:

- 19.6% of educators are working in schools where over 30% of the learners are from a low socio-economic background;
- 25.5% of educators are working in schools where over 10% of the learners have special educational needs;
- 21.3% of educators are working in schools where more than 10% of learners have a first language other than the LOLT.

Macintosh (2003), in an earlier study on managing the previous outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa, stated that the imported ‘alien’ outcomes-based education system failed to address the complexity of our country with our diverse cultural influences. When considering the statistics already mentioned in this chapter, it seems that most learners start their schooling without reaching the expected level of competency to cope with the OBE curriculum. Considering that there is not any barrier-specific adapted curriculum available for the foundation phase educator, this just adds to the educator’s already complicated situation in a Grade one classroom.

3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GRADE 1 YEAR AS THE FOUNDATION FOR FORMAL SCHOOLING

The South African Minister of Basic Education, admitted in the 2015/2016 annual report that education departments in South Africa appear to be obsessed with the Grade 12 results, thus seeming to neglect the importance of the foundation phase. In the process of schooling and education, international studies show that the groundwork for good achievement in Grade 12 is embedded in the foundation phase (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Moloï et al., 2009). Therefore, it might be that the foundation phase, as the name implies, the most important phase preparing for learners' future success in schooling and working careers.

Also, according to the South African government's National Development Plan 2030 (NPC, 2012), the current school system seems to overlook the country's need for competent artisans, and that proper skills training should play a significant role in the education system. Whether learners are prepared for an academic school-leaving certificate or for a just-as-important occupational skills career path, they should start with the best possible foundation to guarantee future success.

If the learner with barriers to learning is not afforded the basic skills of reading and writing in the foundation phase, any career possibilities become difficult or sometimes irrelevant to that learner. Meier (2011) states concerns about the reading levels of SA children and concludes that they cannot read at the expected level. According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (NCES, 2016), South African Grade 4 learners performed the worst out of 50 participating countries. Findings of this report showed that 78% of Grade four learners and 49% of Grade 5 learners could not read with comprehension. Where basic concepts of reading and writing should be embedded in Grade 1, the possibility exists that the inclusive system not only fails the LSEN, but also the other learners in class.

A study done by Kokot (2006) with foundation phase learners in Gauteng (SA) showed that 50.5% of learners experienced moderate to severe learning difficulties or disabilities. This incidence of barriers to learning is significantly higher than reported

in other countries worldwide, where the estimates of 5–10% and a maximum of 20% are reported (UNICEF, 2015). A study done by the Stellenbosch University's Research on Socio-economic Policy (RESEP), by Spaul et al. (2016) has shown that as many as 60% of South African learners in Grade 4 could not read at the end of the grade and in the Eastern Cape, 73% do not complete the minimum schoolwork required by the prescribed curricula.

The Sector of Education and Training Authority's (ETDP SETA, 2018) report on scarce and critical skills showed that there is a scarcity of skills in the early childcare, foundation phase, and special needs teaching sectors. These statistics highlight that although South Africa has a higher percentage of learners reported with barriers to learning compared to the rest of the world, it lacks the capacity to provide trained educators to cater for these learner's needs. The shortage of educators may then also partly explain the high number of learners in the Eastern Cape who are unable to meet the minimum requirements of the curriculum.

Great care should be taken to identify learners with barriers to learning early (Barow & Östlund, 2018). Although the policy of IE does not advocate psychometric testing of learners due to the history of psychological testing in South Africa, the benefits of testing or assessing are to identify support measures to enhance teaching strategies that improve education and support the learner (Barow & Östlund, 2018). The SIAS strategy does, however, recognise the importance of psychometric assessment, if the purpose is to inform teaching and learning processes (DoE, 2014b). If deficits are not identified and remedied in the foundation phase and as early as in Grade one, the learner may carry these acquired deficits in learning throughout their school career. Only early identification, intervention and barrier-specific support can secure future success for learners, whether it is in skills or academic development.

3.4 LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Robinson (2017) conducted a study in the UK, on effective inclusive teacher education for SEN learners, suggesting several principles and practices for regular schools. She believes that there is no single “grand theory” for practicing inclusivity, but highlights the importance of teacher engagement in continuous, career long research and orientation, within the contexts of their classrooms. Furthermore Robinson (2017) found that good collaboration with shared responsibility is necessary and that an approach building practice into theory is more beneficial for inclusivity.

Most learners with barriers to learning in the Sarah Baartman District, whether they have low or high educational needs, are placed in mainstream classes together with their peers. Drawing from my experience as an educational psychologist, consulting with educators in the Eastern Cape, there appear to be several reasons for high needs learners in mainstream schools are given. One reason according to educators are that the special schools in the Eastern Cape are far from the learners’ homes, as the district is predominantly rural. The educators indicated that most communities are poor, and therefore another reason might be that parents cannot afford to send their children far from home. A third reason given by educators was that parents are not comfortable sending young children away from home, especially when they have no money or means to fetch them each weekend, since most families struggle to afford hostel and travel fees for their children if they have been placed far from home. Furthermore, my experience of striving to do referrals has shown that the few special schools in the province have long waiting lists, and learners often end up leaving school before getting admitted into a special school.

In my travels working in the Sarah Baartman District, I have seen that there are few pre-schools, with mostly untrained ECD educators. Day-care often consists of being with grandparents or in informal settings. Some schools have Grade R pre-school classes, but not all children attend these classes. In SA, for the learner with developmental delays, it is essential to make optimal use of this window period of development in the foundation phase (Rossi & Stuart, 2007). Ladbroke (2009) also

emphasises that LSEN learners are not receiving the support that they need in mainstream classes; therefore, many of them lose confidence and are kept back to repeat the year or placed in special schools or drop out in secondary school (Rossi & Stuart, 2007).

3.4.1 Barrier-specific Teaching in a Grade 1 Classroom

The Grade 1 year represents the onset of formal schooling where all learners formally start to read, write and learn the basic principles of numeracy. A strong foundation in literacy and numeracy needs to be established in Grades R and 1 for the learners to experience future success (Bruwer et al., 2014). However, it is expected of educators to teach learners with barriers to learning, no matter their disability. Lewis and Bagree (2013) argue that learners with barriers to learning can only receive the quality education they are entitled to if the educator has extensive knowledge of teaching strategies according to their specific barriers. They conclude that LSEN are marginalised in their educational opportunities because educators are often not trained to support learners in diverse classrooms. The IE system, though, expects diverse teaching, while the often unskilled educator needs to cater for sometimes up to 40 learners in the classroom, where more than half of the learners did not attend a pre-school institution, as previously indicated, and therefore they are likely to need more support.

For some learners in South Africa, their home language differs from the language of teaching and learning (LoLT). Apart from language and socio-economic barriers, there will be some learners with other additional aggravating specific barriers in the classroom. These may include Fetal Alcohol Spectrum disorders (FASD), Down syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), visual impairment, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), epilepsy, and hearing impairment. Davis and Florian's (2004) review of literature highlights the importance of responding to individual differences, as each disability requires different teaching strategies. For example, the needs of the visually impaired learner will not only differ according to the different eye conditions but will extensively differ from those of the hearing impaired.

In other examples, the educator is expected to understand various other diagnosed disorders (e.g. ASD, FASD, LI) and the level the learner is functioning at, to make whatever classroom adaptation needs to be made to accommodate each different learner. The educator should be able to cope with the ADHD child in the classroom and understand that the learner with ASD will be easily agitated with any disruptions in class. These learners are for instance likely to show elevated levels of emotional and behaviour difficulties (Van Herwegen et. al., 2019) that the educator would be expected to understand and accommodate. When the class is noisy, the child with a hearing aid will find it difficult to hear, even for instance, with a frequency modulation (FM) system; this is commonly used for the hearing-impaired in classrooms where the educator wears the FM transmitter and microphone, while the child wears the FM receiver. The visually impaired learner may not be able to see the chalkboard, even if the learner sits in front of the class (Oliva, 2016).

Each of these learners with different impairments starts to read and write differently and needs individual support with their adaptive programmes. Therefore, curriculum adaptation will also differ and need to be barrier specific. Oliva (2016) in a study in Brasil on learners with visual impairment in mainstream notes that assessable adapted curriculum adjustments were not available for educators and contributed to the exclusion of content for some learners. This means that a single educator in the Grade 1 class should not only be able to adapt the curriculum for all the specific disabilities but also must have access to all the disability-specific supporting material for each learner. Adelman and Taylor (2017) believe that a single educator will not be able to assist children with diverse needs alone, but will need assistance in the classroom.

In planning a support programme, the educator should also be able to identify the developmental stage of the individual learners and their different abilities. For instance, learners with FASD (Ali et al., 2018) or Down syndrome (Rihtman et al., 2010) have cognitive ranges that vary widely, and these learners need to be assisted according to their abilities for optimal development. The educator in the Eastern Cape is expected to manage this diverse setup without having any assistants in the classroom most of the time, or any remedial educator to aid them (Luning, 2015). The support teams from the district office or circuit management centre are understaffed and experience

systemic challenges (Kota et al., 2017; Luning, 2015), unable to render weekly or even quarterly services. The question must be asked if this complex and diverse workload can be expected of one educator, even if he/she was an expert in all different disabilities, where the foundation of formal schooling must be embedded.

Doherty, an autism activist was mandated to consider an inclusive system in New Brunswick, Canada. According to the CBC News, (March 6, 2016), he stated:

If you look at a medical condition like a physical medical condition, you will not just assume that there was one solution for everything and yet that is the approach we take to this educational philosophy that requires us to interact with kids with very complex conditions.

Doherty concluded that the present system of inclusion in classrooms is failing all of those involved in it.

3.4.2 Classroom size

A national educators' survey was conducted by the Canadian Teacher's Federation in 2011 on educator concerns about teaching and learning (Froese-Germain et al, 2012). The average class size in the survey was twenty-one learners per class. Classes ranged from 22.1 students per class for Grades four to Grade eight. Pre-school classes had an average of nineteen children in a class (Froese-Germain et al, 2012). English schools (including French immersion) had an average class size of about 22 students, while schools with French as a first language had a slightly smaller average class size of just over 19 students. Foundation phase classes had an average of 2.7 learners with barriers (Froese-Germain et al, 2012). The number of learners with barriers to learning increased gradually, without adapting classroom sizes. These increasing numbers led to the British Columbia Teachers Federation taking the Canadian education authorities to court (Laitsch et al, 2021). In 2016, after the teachers won the Supreme Court case, the education authorities of Canada agreed that class composition and inclusion are some of the reasons for declining student achievement levels and that smaller classes can be beneficial for individualised instruction to learners. Other Canadian research conducted on IE (Bennet, 2016) concluded that the special needs policy, as designed by theorists, is not working in

practice; and urged authorities to re-think in order to achieve a better educational environment for educators and students alike.

Classroom design, size and diversity in the classroom (Suleymanov, 2015) play important influencing roles in teaching learners with barriers to learning in a mainstream classroom. Most special education researchers agree that smaller classes have the greatest positive impact on students with the greatest educational needs (Laitsch et al., 2021; OISE-UT/CEA, 2010). In South Africa, the educator-learner ratio is, on average, 1 to 36. The South African School Administration Management System (SA-SAMS), that collects and record data for each learner in South Africa, makes provision for extra educators and remedial educators in schools, according to the number of learners with barriers to learning in the school. According to EWP6 (DoE, 2001b), the educator-learner weighting will differ depending on the disability of the learner, where the highest needs will be provided with the smallest ratio of 1 teacher for 5 learners. This educator-learner ratio is applicable in SA's special schools but seems not to form part of the equation in the mainstream schools.

3.4.2 Barrier-specific Assistive Devices

When learners with barriers to learning are placed in a mainstream classroom, they should have the right to access disability-appropriate assistive devices. According to the Guidelines for Full Service Schools (DoE, 2010a), these devices should be available in each classroom, if necessary, and should not complicate or compromise the learner's daily activities and learning. Being able to cater for all the possible disabilities in schools might be very expensive. Visually-impaired learners, for example, need to make use of closed-circuit television to bring the chalkboard to their table. The educator will need a monitor system to be able to communicate the information on the screens of the learners. This must be available in all classrooms as soon as the learners start to exchange classrooms. A computer screen reader program for Microsoft Windows (JAWS), that allows blind and visually impaired users to read the screen either with a text-to-speech output or by a refreshable braille display, must be made available for the learner to have proper understanding and internet access. These are expensive systems but are not the only devices that are needed. These learners will in some cases need large print, but a learner with tunnel

vision will prefer smaller print. All workbooks must be printed with darker lines. Adapted rulers, calculators, black pens and large print handbooks are only a few of the things that are needed.

The learners' needs are different (Mock & Kaufman, 2002) for example, learners with hearing impairment needs are very different from learners with specific learning disorders or autism. Therefore, the educator must be highly qualified and informed on all disabilities when choosing barrier-specific assistive devices.

From my experience, it seems for schools to be able to purchase these devices, the government needs to provide funding, but they also need to make provision for the training of educators to understand and operate the devices. Again, the question must be asked whether it is fair or even possible for an educator to be an expert on all these different devices that are available on the market. It takes intensive training and years of experience to be an expert on one disability, and therefore it cannot be expected of a single educator to be an expert on all disabilities and assistive devices. Currently, only specialised schools are equipped to cater for these learners' needs, and these schools were only able to equip themselves fully over a long period of time. Newly appointed educators in specialised schools receive in-service educator training from other specialised and experienced educators. In Eastern Cape mainstream schools or district offices, there are currently no appropriate assistive devices available. The result is that schools are unable to provide for the learners with barriers to learning the quality and fully comprehensive education, as mandated by policy.

3.5 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The developmental psychologist Erikson (1959), describes eight stages of human development where the child should have resolved a particular conflict at each stage to successfully move to the next stage. Erikson (1978) explains that children in middle childhood (Bastable & Dart, 2007), approximately ages seven to 11 years, which he called the Industry versus Inferiority stage, compare themselves with their peers and judge their successes and failures against those of their peers. Erikson (1959)

believed that the psychosocial development of the child will depend on the child's experiences of his or her external relationships and the environment, through being beside others.

From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), growing from toddler to the middle stage, the parents and caregivers are no longer the only essential figures in the children's lives. As children enter formal school, the child's micro-environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1978) broadens. According to Erikson's (1978) theory, educators and peers start to play a more influential role. Erikson (1963, 1978) further proposes that every stage has a goal to achieve in order for the child to develop into a healthy person. The achievement of a task leads to happiness and success with subsequent tasks, and failure leads to unhappiness and possible low self-esteem and later failure.

Children experiencing barriers to learning might experience emotional and social challenges when comparing themselves to other children in the classroom. The Industry versus Inferiority stage might be a very vulnerable stage for learners with barriers, as feelings of incompetence and not achieving compared to the group might influence the child's self-awareness and self-esteem (Cherry, 2020). Therefore, the educator must be very sensitive about the adaptation in the classroom for learners with barriers to learning in their Grade one year.

The development of children does not always have a precise timetable, but developmental delays will be suspected when development falls out of an expected range for a particular age group. It seems that some confusion may appear around the use of the terms by educators on development. Developmental delay is a general term often used, but there is a need to separate developmental disabilities from developmental delays (Kahn & Leventhal, 2021).

Short-lived, non-permanent problems may cause developmental delays (Poon et al., 2010). For example, a speech delay can be caused by hearing loss from ear infections, or a physical delay caused by prolonged illness or hospitalisation. Learning and attention problems may cause delays. The cause of the delay may not always be predictable. There may be delays in gross or fine motor skills, a vision problem that can be corrected with spectacles, multiple ear infections, poor nutrition, trauma or

injuries that caused delays due to the long-term nature of the injury, abuse or several other challenges that the child might encounter. Early identification and intervention can assist the learner in overcoming the delay (Singh & Anekar, 2018). A lack of intervention may lead to challenges that might be very difficult or even impossible to remedy, and these learners will need special education throughout their school careers.

A developmental disability (SIAS, 2014b) relates to a status that a child might have inherited or been born with, for example, various syndromes and neurodevelopmental disorders, ASD, FASD, specific learning disability or other brain injuries, or it may have been caused by trauma like an accident or illness. The child, therefore, cannot “outgrow” the disability (Gibbons et al., 2015). Developmental delays will be a secondary challenge as a result of the disability (Ali et al., 2018). Early intervention can help the learner to reach their full potential through education that is responsive to the learners’ needs (Rosenberg et al., 2008; Ali et al., 2018). In this sub-section, a summary of important aspects, relevant to grade one learners, is provided.

3.5.1 The Physical Development of the Grade 1 Learner

Bronfenbrenner’s (2006) bio-ecological systems approach emphasises the mobile body as part of the microsystem that supports life and interacts with the environment. Any physiological challenge or condition will have an impact on the development and learning of a child.

Most Grade 1 learners have developed better gross and small motor development by the end of the grade. This leads to improved coordination. By the end of Grade 1, the learner should have reached the following milestones (Centre for Childhood Disability Research, 2013; Du Plessis et al., 2015):

- The large muscle tone (gross motor) should be well developed (Gabbard & Krebs, 2012) in the body. Grade one learners should be able to catch a ball, skip with a rope, stand on one leg, keep rhythm and dance to music.
- Fine motor skills develop rapidly in the first year of formal schooling. The development of controlled use of small muscles, particularly in the hands takes

place. Grade one learners should be able to tie their shoelaces, use a pair of scissors, do up zips and buttons, use cutlery, write their names at the beginning of the year and write sentences by the end of the year.

- Activities of daily living refer to the ability to perform everyday tasks. Grade one children should be able to take care of themselves, which includes eating, dressing and bathing themselves.
- Visual perception is the ability of the eye to take in information and interpret it. It is not just seeing but translating visual images into information that the brain can remember, organise, recognise and use (Chung et al., 2020). The Grade one learner should be able to recognise shapes and colours and understand the concept of patterns. Learners with visual perceptual problems will experience academic challenges in recognising letters, words, visual memory, spatial relations, and visual-motor integration (Vlok et al., 2011). Spelling and handwriting, as well as left/right discrimination, may be affected. The child may experience challenges with hand-eye coordination. Letter and number reversals may occur.

The learner with barriers to learning may experience challenges in one or more of the areas described above. Drawing from the Haegele & Park (2016) study from Ohio State University, on tactics to promote physical activity for students with intellectual disabilities, these learners may also present with less self-determination.

3.5.2 The Social and Emotional Development of the Grade 1 Learner

Social and emotional skills involve the ability to relate to other people through the connection between internal experience and the world that we live in (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999). That includes being able to express and control emotions and form relationships with others. Learners who can control their emotions will make safe decisions and will be able to calm themselves when angered. They can make effective decisions when challenged and demonstrate positive social relationships with their peers (Bastable & Dart, 2007).

By entering school, children tend to widen their horizons from parent and family attachment as the first domain of emotions, to rely on their peers and educator in their judgement between right and wrong. Taylor et al. (2017) believe that the school is a key setting in social and emotional development, in terms of building life skills associated with academic success and behavioural outcomes. These statements prove the importance of the educators' and peer group's approval for learners with barriers to flourishing in a mainstream setting.

Children begin to develop a sense of independence in Grade 1. They explore the world around them and try new activities. They are willing to make new friends and meet new people. Vygotsky (1978) states the importance of the interactions of contexts and relationships in the child's development, and the roles of older children and adults to teach them things that they have never done before.

Emotions form an integral part of one's existence and regulate biological (body), psychological and social functioning (Izard, 1991). Learners who are emotionally upset might be absent from school often and complain frequently about stomach aches and headaches. Emotional security plays an important role in children's development and their ability to concentrate and learn (Hyson et al., 2006). The latter authors emphasise that a secure classroom, with a positive attachment to the educator, will ensure a protective environment for at-risk children to learn and explore. Positive emotions will enhance the learners' self-regulating skills, and these learners will not likely present with behavioural problems (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

An emotionally well-adjusted child can express feelings and needs, manage separation well, interact within a group, show responsibility and have a markedly higher chance of early school success (Price, 2015). Emotional and social skills can never be seen in isolation but interact with cognitive skills (Goldberg et al., 2019; Goodman et al., 2015); therefore, interventions aimed at developing learners' social and emotional skills enhance their achievement. Gardner (1999) emphasised the relationship between emotional processing skills and memory, where emotional stable learners will be able to concentrate and memorise information better. These approaches are also, in the long run, cost-beneficial for the country (Price, 2015), as

socially and emotionally well-developed children will develop into economically contributing members of society.

They may still find it challenging to make choices because they want to please and seek approval (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010) but are able to distinguish between concepts like right and wrong, fair and unfair, good and bad (Hardman, 2012). Ecocentrism starts to disappear, friends become more important and they can listen to other people's viewpoints (Hartman, 2012). A learner with barriers to learning who experiences rejection or feels different or 'looked at' or lacks approval, will lack self-confidence. The learner with barriers to learning may not be at the same emotional and social developmental stage as the rest of their peer group. This is often the case, and the developmental stage of some of these learners may be as much as two years behind their peers and are therefore still on a pre-school level. Bugental (2006) notes that, when considering learners with barriers in their age cohort peer group, educators need to take into account the child's developmental stage. The social interaction and peer experience of children will influence their socio-emotional disposition and reflect in the behaviour of the child (Emerson & Einfeld, 2010). Drawing from Palikara et al. (2019), a sense of belonging is important in a school or group for learners' social-emotional health.

When the learner's developmental stage is ignored by the educator and peer group, the learner may feel "left out". This feeling can lead to a recursive cycle of emotional insecurity that ends up in behavioural and scholastic problems and further potential rejection by peers and educators. When a learner struggles perpetually in school, the learner may act out and become difficult in a class. Furthermore, some learners with barriers experience social developmental delays and do not relate to their age cohort peer group. There is a higher risk for emotional and behaviour difficulties in children with developmental delays (Emerson & Einfeld, 2010). The characteristics of the individual with barriers makes them vulnerable and their peer experience (Charman et al., 2015), play a role in the emotional development of the individual and shapes their socio-emotional behaviour. It can be reasoned that the learner who is still not in the developmental stage of their peers may feel that he or she does not belong and therefore experience feelings of rejection. For the same reason, the group may also experience challenges in relating to the learner with barriers and therefore ignore or

even tease this learner. Such learners may skip school, which furthers the deterioration in their schoolwork and relationships. The result will be a learner with no confidence in society or themselves.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the relation between cognitive growth and interpersonal relationships through social interaction, to progress in the relevant zones of proximal development. Cognitive growth will only happen when learners with barriers to learning feel safe and supported to socially and emotionally relate to their peer group.

3.5.3 The Cognitive Development of the Grade One Learner

Cognitive development relates to intellectual development and the ability to think, learn and solve problems. Children in Grade 1 should be able to concentrate on one activity, solve problems and find solutions to reach a goal.

A deficit in cognitive development will impact the learner's adaptive functioning. They will be less motivated, experience challenges in all aspects of development and find it more difficult to grasp concepts and recall information. Learners with cognitive challenges will have less adequate skills in solving problems, decision-making and setting new goals.

According to Piaget's cognitive developmental theory Grade 1 learners are in their concrete operational stage where thinking is still based mainly on concrete thinking but they begin to develop operational thinking (Hardman, 2012). Their spatial development and two-dimensional reasoning develop further and they start reasoning with symbols and begin to categorise in a logical manner (Hardman, 2012). They explore their worlds and find answers to their questions.

According to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (2012) in South Africa, by the end of the Grade 1 year, learners should be able to read sight words without sounding and start to read longer words by sounding. They need to understand the relationship between letters and sounds, have a better time awareness and understand increments of time, days, weeks, months, and seasons (NCS, 2012). By the end of Grade 1 most learners use language in longer sentences and start to understand concepts of past,

present and future. They will know the alphabet and be able to write sentences and short stories. They should know and use language in a comprehensive way, and most learners will have stopped reversing letters by the end of the year.

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU, 2013) states that foundation phase learners must write four times a week. This writing should include an extended piece of writing. Grade 1 learners should be able to write sentences on their own by the end of Grade one. However, the LoLT poses a significant challenge to the educators across South Africa (NEEDU, 2013), as some learners are attending schools where the LoLT is not their home language. Therefore, educators must teach these learners first-time concepts in a language that they have not mastered yet, as some learners start schooling in their second language.

All learners with barriers to learning are likely to experience challenges in academic readiness during their first year of formal schooling. Therefore, the academic programme should accommodate these individual barriers. The learner with FASD, for example, experiences significant challenges in the areas of phonemic awareness, print awareness, oral language and reading skills. Combined with adverse socio-economic environmental conditions, this contributes to learners' underdeveloped literacy profile (Geswint, 2017).

3.6 SCHOOL READINESS OF THE LSEN LEARNER

Children need a certain level of cognitive as well as social-emotional development to be ready for formal schooling and to be able to engage in classroom activities that promote learning (Ladd & Dinella, 2009). This means that the children's developmental stage must be on a level where they will be able to adapt to a formal environment and be ready for formal schooling as soon as they enter Grade one. The more mature learner, with a higher level of cognitive development, will better regulate emotions and social influence and will therefore be more predisposed to learn. Logical reasoning is more developed in the concrete operational phase and this age between 6 and 7 years are considered the best age to start formal school when looking at the developmental intellectual accomplishments of children at this age (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

The SA Education Laws Amendment Act, 2002 (Act 50 of 2002) set the age of admission to Grade 1 as the year in which the child turns seven. However, the school-going age of Grade 1 was changed to age five, if children turned six on or before June 30 in their Grade 1 year (DBE, 2021). The policy does not require a specific level of school readiness but it is stated in the Full-Service School guidelines (DoE, 2002) that the process of teaching and learning must be flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles.

As described earlier, when entering formal schooling, the child must be ready not only on a cognitive level but also on a social and emotional level. All of these are important for the child to form a positive relationship with peers and the educator. Their holistic development will indicate their school readiness level and how they will bond with their peer group and educator in participating in constructive classroom activities (Ladd & Dinella, 2009).

As discussed in Chapter 2 more than half of the learners in the Eastern Cape start their formal schooling without previously attending pre-school. Most learners with disabilities fall into this group, as it is sometimes difficult for parents to find a pre-school willing to accommodate their children. Although children with FASD or cognitive challenges relating to other diagnoses may attend pre-school, as a result of their developmental delays, they are likely to be behind their so-called 'normal' peer group. The tools necessary for academic readiness often progress much more slowly for children with FASD (Geswint, 2017). As a result, foundational concept acquisition, such as shapes, letters, and words, presents more of a challenge for these children than other learners (Kalberg & Buckley, 2006). It is likely that the challenges just mentioned will also be true for learners with other disabilities that involve cognitive challenges. Therefore, the implication is that learners with cognitive barriers to learning will be behind the expected developmental norm and not yet ready for formal schooling and the challenges of the CAPS, which is designed for those who are school ready.

Deviations from the expected norm can also be because of poverty, abuse, injuries, neurodevelopmental disorders or physical disabilities (Charman, 2015; Geswint, 2017; Oliva, 2016). The Grade 1 curriculum, however, is designed for learners who are

school ready and the educator, together with the district-based support team, is expected to adapt the curriculum according to the learners' needs. According to the Full-Service School Policy (DoE, 2015), the curriculum must be flexible so that it is accessible to all learners, irrespective of their learning needs.

3.7 EFFICIENCY OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AS AN ENTITY: WHAT DOES EWP6 PROPOSE?

3.7.1 Education system's responsibility towards learners with barriers to learning

The EWP6 on IE (DoE, 2001) planned to fully implement IE by 2020, through mechanisms and support structures that would benefit vulnerable learners and reduce the dropout rate. As 2022 approaches, we need to re-visit the policies and consider the progress made during the period of inclusion. The national government was fully aware of the problematic "complex interface of policy and practice", as Professor Asmal, the then Minister of Education, expressed in his introduction of EWP6 (DoE, 2001). In theory, the inclusive policy was well planned, but only by introducing it in practice could the outcomes be evaluated after nearly twenty years of IE, to see whether the country has had the means and ability to successfully integrate it.

The key strategies by the department as introduced in EWP6 to improve IE (DoE, 2001) are described below:

1) Transforming all aspects of the education system by developing an integrated system of education. After the introduction of the inclusive system, various transformations in education took place. According to the Republic of South Africa (2015/2016) yearbook, the average staffing ratios in special schools were around 1:10 (ranging from 1:6 to 1:16). The DoE (Republic of South Africa, 2015/2016) realised that it would be impossible to expand the system based on the conventional model. It was expected that the natural geographical distribution of learners would contribute to only a few learners with barriers in each mainstream school, and most of these learners could then be accommodated in FSS in the communities. Therefore, it was

expected that this would compensate for and be beneficial for limited finances and the shortage of specialist staff (Republic of South Africa, 2015/2016).

When schools are fully inclusive, on average, a school's population should comprise no more than a small percentage of individuals with special education needs. Given these expectations of a small number of learners with barriers to learning in schools, the government then planned to have a pool of specialists at the district offices, rather than in schools. Furthermore, the objective was to allocate posts following the actual educational support needs of the learners concerned and not based on the category of disability. It was planned that this resourcing model would create a dedicated pool of posts for the instructional support system (Republic of South Africa, 2015/2016):

- Particular attention was to be given to optimising the expertise of specialist support personnel, such as therapists, psychologists, remedial educators and health professionals.
- Teaching posts were to be allocated to all schools in terms of the existing 2002 post-distribution model. In filling these posts, the school management was obliged to ensure that the learners who 'generated' the posts were adequately catered for, through appropriate and effective educational measures.
- A pool of posts for the district support teams and special schools that would act as resource centres to provide support to schools was to be created in terms of a formula related to the differing levels of programme costs. These posts would be top-sliced from the total pool of posts in a province before the post-distribution model was applied to schools.
- These posts, together with those traditionally allocated to provincial education support services, would thus form a pool of specialists with appropriate expertise and experience.
- Posts would, therefore, be utilised for the deployment of resource persons to provide direct interventionist programmes to learners in a range of settings and to serve as 'consultant-mentors' to school management teams, classroom educators and school governing bodies.
- FSS could also designate a 'learning support educator', preferably competent and experienced in collaboration and facilitation skills.

- Staff provisioning and funding measures were to ensure that FSS had additional support to reduce class sizes, to be able to provide additional support programmes and to fulfil their resource centre function.

2) Introducing special needs and support services throughout the system:

- Learning and teaching support material would be provided to all schools.
- Assistive devices would be available in schools.
- District-based support teams (DBSTs) would be available to support educators. District offices are the link between schools and the provincial education department. The education specialists in the district gather information, diagnose any problems and needs in schools, intervene and support schools and organise and give training to educators (Republic of South Africa, 2015/2016). Each education district office throughout the country should have DBSTs, which provide support to the schools and learners. The team is multi-disciplinary and, therefore, provides a multitude of services including learning support, curriculum advice, counselling, parent meetings and guidance, psycho-educational services, training, mentoring, monitoring, consultation, classroom observation, programme development, inter-sectoral collaboration, and development at an institutional level.
- Specialised professional support services should be made available for schools. (From my experience working as a psychologist in education, in Gauteng and the Western Cape, the ratio of a specialist to a school is one for 22 to 30 schools. In the Eastern Cape, this ratio is higher, and the professional specialist in some districts have up to 80 or more schools per specialist to support. The workload of one psychologist or any other single professional therapist is challenging to maintain in a school. When a single specialist is tasked to deliver quality service in ten or more schools, the task becomes impossible).

3) The development of special schools in centres of learning to ensure a barrier-free physical environment.

- 4) By forming a supportive and inclusive psycho-social learning environment the neighbouring schools in the community will be supported.
- 5) Developing a flexible curriculum to ensure access to all learners.
- 6) Promoting the rights and responsibilities of parents, educators and learners.
- 7) Providing effective development programmes for educators, support personnel, and other relevant human resources.
- 8) Fostering holistic and integrated support provision through inter-sectoral collaboration.
- 9) Developing a community-based support system that includes a preventative and developmental approach to support.
- 10) Developing funding strategies that ensure redress for historically disadvantaged communities.

Although the policy around EWP6 is well defined it seems there remain several challenges to fulfil its intention towards inclusion. The Eastern Cape has 44 special schools where many schools still struggle with infrastructure, resource material and a shortage of human resources, as well as specialised support staff. It is, therefore, difficult to support other mainstream schools in their communities. Mainstream schools are not resourced to support LSEN (Amnesty International, 2020). An adapted curriculum, as well as the three streams model, have recently been introduced in selected schools in the Eastern Cape but are still 'in their baby shoes', and the DoE started training during 2019 in the Eastern Cape. A few schools are introducing the three streams model, but a shortage of trained educators and resources remains problematic. It seems that financial constraints might be a further contribution to the challenges Experienced By the DoE in implementation of the inclusive system (Amnesty International, 2020).

3.8 EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LSEN AND FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM

Several studies have been done in the developed world on educators' perceptions of LSEN in inclusive systems. Some studies report positive perceptions and practices, mainly where teachers felt confident and received sustained support and resources. (e.g., Andriichuk, 2017; Trussler & Robinson, 2015; Verenikina, 2008). It seems that the more affluent countries of the Global North with better resources, report better practices and more positive teacher perceptions (e.g., Antikainen, 2010; Lundahl, 2016). In contrast, studies of developing contexts concluded that educators were not adequately trained; indicating their resistance to change, that they could not cope with the demands, fear of victimisation by authorities, suffering from elevated stress levels and poor policy management and governance of education delivery (e.g., Glewwe, 2013; Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016; Kota, et. al., 2017; Mokaleng & Möwes, 2020). More of these studies are from the Global South, including educators in less affluent countries where there also seem to be inadequate resources and support systems (e.g., Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018).

Training seemed to be one of the main concerns for teachers across many contexts (as reported in Mag et al., 2017). A study by the OECD (2009) indicated that more than 30% of educators reported a need for further training on special learning needs. Almost 50% of school principals reported a need for educators who are competent in teaching learners with barriers to learning, and that this lack of skilled educators prevented the schools from providing quality education for these learners. According to the OECD (2013), few educators reported that professional development in teaching SEN learners had a positive impact on their teaching of these learners.

Robinson's (2017) study on effective inclusive teacher education in the UK reports that the "theory into practice" model, where universities train students in theories and schools are the settings where they learn to apply these theories, may lead to a reality shock for beginner teachers. She proposes a much more interactive model, where teachers join in the curriculum debate as part of a professional learning community, to promote more effective inclusive training.

Several research studies in South Africa recognise the numerous challenges faced by educators, ranging from: gaps between policy and practice; a fast-paced CAPS curriculum; an inaccessible non-individualised curriculum; to the overwhelming volume of administrative tasks and planning of individual support programmes in overcrowded classrooms (Mahlo, 2017b; Marais, 2016; Mayaba, 2008; Willemse & Deacon, 2015). Several of these challenges seem to stem from education policies not meeting the realities of practice (Engelbrecht & Savolainen 2018).

Mayaba's (2008) study in KwaZulu Natal on educators' experiences of IE found negative attitudes amongst teachers towards the inclusive system and LSEN, as they reportedly felt that they lacked the necessary skills to teach learners with barriers. Teachers also had negative perceptions about curriculum adaptation. They experienced a high workload with a lack of resources and support in inclusive classrooms. All these circumstances led to teachers experiencing elevated stress levels.

Two Eastern Cape studies, one by McConnachie (2013) in a primary school and another one in three secondary schools (Heeralal & Jama, 2014), on teachers' experiences and the implementation of IE, found several challenges hindering implementation. Teachers reported that the medical model was still used diagnostically and that they were not trained in the inclusive system, or how to support learners with barriers. They pointed to a lack of resources in schools and inadequate support from the district offices.

Willemse & Deacon (2015), in a study in the North-West province on the relationship between a sense of calling and work attitudes, found that those educators that find meaning in their work portrayed positive work attitudes. They suggested that for the delivery of quality education, the DoE should offer sufficient training and support to educators to enhance meaningful work.

Marais (2016) from UNISA in the Gauteng province, did a study on problems experienced by teachers in overcrowded classrooms. She noted that overcrowded classrooms are part of South African schools and this challenge is largely unaddressed. Teachers find it difficult to manage time in overcrowded classrooms,

where they report wasting time on prescribed administrative tasks and behaviour management. Therefore, less time is available for instruction and support to individual learners. Teachers have also no time for innovative variety teaching strategies and perceive learners in these classrooms as not motivated to learn. Overcrowded classrooms further lead to elevated stress levels and burnout in teachers.

The study completed by Mahlo (2017b) also in Gauteng, on diverse teaching in the inclusive system confirmed that all the participating educators agreed on the human rights value of IE as a theory, as it embraces diversity and equality. However, they found IE impossible to implement without adequate support. According to the educators, this support needs to include human resources, assistive devices, smaller classrooms and training, as well as an adapted curriculum.

Engelbrecht and Savolainen (2018) found, in a study comparing South African and Finnish educators' attitudes, that for educators to be able to succeed in inclusive teaching and feel self-efficacy, an interactive approach between policymakers, professional support staff, and educators is necessary, within the unique country's context. The authors conclude that good policies or initial training of educators are not enough to support successful IE.

With more research becoming available on the inclusive system in South Africa, it seems evident that the burden of affording learners with barriers the right to quality education is predominantly felt by educators, without the necessary support from the education system. It seems that most educators want to achieve and have a passion for learners and teaching, but feel that the system fails them by not providing the necessary human resources and support, and by not understanding what is needed to teach learners with barriers to learning.

Drawing from my own experience, educators might, at first glance, be perceived as unwilling to accommodate learners with barriers to learning. However, through my experience of over thirty years in education, working with educators and children with barriers to learning in South Africa, it is maybe that they experience feelings of guilt and frustration, not towards the learners but due to feeling that they cannot offer the learner what is needed, to reach their full potentials.

3.9 THE NEED FOR THIS STUDY

South African schools and specifically Eastern Cape schools, adopted a human rights-based model, with emphasis on the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, to adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). Article 24 of the Convention highlights three important elements that countries need to consider and seek to implement in their educational systems: the right to IE for all learners at all stages of their education; the provision of reasonable accommodation to enable IE; and the provisioning of the required support measures (DSD, 2008). However, systemic barriers in the Department of Basic Education (DBE), despite numerous policies and regulations, appear to contribute to the neglect and unsatisfactory progress of LSEN learners.

Glewwe (2013) overviewed education policies and issues in developing countries. Glewwe (2013, p.49) states that: “Despite large and increasingly sophisticated literature, remarkably little is known about the impact of education policies on student outcomes in developing countries”. These are investigated in this study. Although the SIAS policy (2014b) was established to support learners with barriers to learning, it seems to be a lengthy process that offers little support (McConnachie, 2013). The DBE struggles with inadequate finances, poor infrastructure in many schools, shortage of schools, insufficient human resources and support systems (Matshipi et al., 2017; Mayaba, 2008). These systemic barriers might hinder the development of LSEN and contribute to poor progress and undignified treatment. The situation as it is experienced in the selected district of the Eastern Cape needs to be investigated, for the benefit of learners.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one indicated the orientation of the study and outlined the research problems. Chapter two presented the reader with a literature review while chapter three gave an overview of the current situation of learners with barriers to learning, in the inclusive system. Chapter four describes the research design and methodology through exploring the relevant underpinning paradigm that informed the approach to this study, the chosen methodology and research design, methods used in data collection, analysis of data and aspects related to the credibility of the study. My reflections, describing my positionality in relation to this research, end this chapter.

As noted in the introductory chapter this study aims to investigate selected stakeholders' views on the inclusive system, as applied to learners with barriers to learning in their first year of formal schooling, in a district of the Eastern Cape. It is hoped that the findings will lead to increased awareness of the functioning of and possible inadequacies in the system. This study aims to contribute to debates in the DoE on a national, provincial, district and school level; to re-think and consider adaptations to the current model, foregrounding the learners' needs in a South African context.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following on from these aims, the following research questions were designed to guide this study. These questions underpin explorations with key adult stakeholders in relation to the progress of a cohort of grade 1 learners in a district of the Eastern Cape.

1. How does the inclusive system impact the development and psychological wellbeing of the grade one learner with barriers to learning, in mainstream education?

2. To what extent are the learners with barriers to learning affected by the inclusive system, and what are the benefits of the current education model?
3. How does the current education model contribute towards international human rights objectives and the constitutional imperatives for children, to serve the best interest of the learner with special education needs?

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is a way of collecting and analysing data through lived experiences of informants, by interpreting data to give meaning to context (Willig, 2013). It is often used in social sciences to understand behaviour (Hossain, 2011) by asking questions about processes of participants experiences in their natural settings. Whilst qualitative methods may be criticized for supposed subjectivity (since the research is influenced by the viewpoints of the researcher and participants), it is this very inherent element of subjectivity that promotes the fulfilling of the research objectives and therefore involves subjectivity to a certain degree (Willig, 2013).

For this research, a qualitative design was used, where complementary data were collected on the same topic (Creswell, 2007). The reason for collecting qualitative data was to understand and interpret the phenomena of participants' unique thoughts and feelings as a result of their lived experiences (van Manen, 2002) in the inclusive classroom and system. Therefore, these data helped me to understand the experiences of educators, parents, and district officials concerning the progress of grade one learners with barriers to learning, in inclusive classrooms.

For this study, data were obtained through the SIAS process, which includes the learner profiler, records of learners, assessment instruments such as school readiness assessments to identify the learners with barriers to learning. Concurrent with this data collection, qualitative data were gathered through educator questionnaires and interviews. Focus groups were held with educators and district ESSS officials, to explore perceptions of the experiences of grade one LSEN learners in mainstream classrooms. Parent focus groups also contributed information, thus strengthening the data from a community perspective. The analysis of data aimed to establish common

themes (Mouton, 2001). I made use of multiple referents, sources, and methods of collecting data to contribute to the findings of the study.

Qualitative research allowed me to explore and gain new insights through the experience of each participant in a context-specific environment (Merriam, 2002). Through data analysis, I aimed to understand the relationship between concepts and identify patterns, to synthesise these into themes in the data (Mouton, 2001). Template analysis (Brooks & King, 2014) enabled progress to be made by providing a method for processing the volume of data collected.

Qualitative research suited this study well, since through the qualitative methods used, I studied real-life situations where informed participants were able to provide “thick” information (Denzin, 1989) on their experiences of learners with barriers to learning in the current schooling system. The collection of data through documentation, learner records and developmental checklists enabled me to compare learner information, progress, and perceptions of the implementation of LSEN. Through documentary and interactively generated data, I gradually formed a deeper understanding of the key stakeholders’ ideas. By exploring perceptions of the progress of learners with barriers to learning, qualitative research enabled me to consider the findings in relation to the larger education system. This qualitative research study was based upon the constructivist paradigm to be explored below.

4.3.1 The Constructivist paradigm

Wellington (2000) describes a research paradigm as to how one views the world; Neuman (2011) describes a paradigm as a system of thinking and Babbie (2020) considers it to be a framework for observation and understanding. In this sub-section, I will strive to explain how I made meaning of the various research experiences, through clarifying the influences of the social and interactional contexts upon meaning-making processes.

Constructivism draws from some components of both post-positivist and constructivist approaches to provide research ontology and epistemology (Brown et al, 2002). Guba (1990) explains that the essence of paradigms is formed through an ontology that

describes the nature of our reality, or the assumptions we use to believe that something is real (Scotland, 2012). Constructivism describes the construction of multiple realities where qualitative methods are used to gain and interpret knowledge (Hatch, 2002). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), constructivism describes the perspectives, feelings, and beliefs of participants, based upon their experiences. Epistemology describes what we know of the world and the resultant chosen methodology creates a holistic view of knowledge gained through descriptions to form patterns.

The constructivist paradigm originates from the views of Piaget (Vygotsky, 1978), proposing that knowledge is gained in a social-cultural environment through social interactions in a certain place and time. Although Vygotsky did not propose certain stages of development, he contemplated processes in learning and development where more significant others guide the learner until the learner becomes competent, all within the ZPD (Tudge, 1992b). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory creates opportunities for children to learn through interaction with more knowledgeable teachers and peers (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012). Working together and participating in various activities is a social source of development and requires certain strategies and opportunities for learning. These authors also emphasise the acquisition of language as a central source of social and cognitive development, because thoughts are shaped through language. Tudge et al. (2003) emphasised the importance of collaboration between the individual, the interpersonal and the cultural-historical context in which a child masters methods of reasoning and problem-solving in the processes of learning and meaning-making, thus gaining knowledge.

Knowledge is socially constructed through the meaning-making of people's experiences (according to their beliefs, values and culture) created from the interactions between people in a specific environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Mahn and John-Steiner (2012) state that humans construct meanings first from social interactions, these then become internalised in their thinking, thus through talking with each other, we share and deepen our own meaning-making and understandings. Through internalisation of these sociocultural interactions, better problem-solving strategies are developed and this leads to higher mental functions in the ZPD, (Tudge,

1992b). In other words, through guidance by a skilled other, learners develop skills to work on their own and thus become more competent.

The constructivist approach is unapologetically subjective, for reality (perceived to be subjective) is the construct of the human mind, underlined in the philosophy of relativism (Tudge & Hogan, 1997). This means that constructivism supports subjective knowledge generation, where the way of meaning-making is socially constructed and relative according to a person's individual, interpersonal and sociocultural outlook (Tudge & Hogan, 1997).

Guba & Lincoln (1989) describe constructivism as a way to understand and interpret the subjective world of human experience; where the research is grounded in the collected data and the findings are not unduly influenced by research theory. The inductive nature of constructivism begins with generalised observation, after that the researcher looks for and finds patterns in the data, to develop the theory to describe the data (Bryman, 2008a). Subjectivism stems from the focus upon the individual's perception, beliefs, and experience of what is real. Theory, to explain the results of the research, is then developed from the way humans make meaning of their worlds (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Interpretivism is part of a relativist ontological perspective, drawing from the position that reality is relative, socially constructed and subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Humans believe that something exists and is real, through the meanings made of their perceptions of reality. This means that reality is socially constructed through human interactions, communication and experiences within intersubjective environments. Ritchie et al. (2013) explain that there is thus no single shared reality since reality only becomes knowable through socially constructed meanings. For example, every participant will have their own view relating to their experience in their school and classroom, informed by their interactions within the education system. Therefore, there are multiple realities as individuals have different views, perceptions and experiences according to their own beliefs, cultural influences and situations (Krauss, 2005). Thus, a person's ideas of reality derive from the individual's interpretations and meaning-making about the world, through perceived experience relative to the person's

sociocultural environment. Therefore, no two persons' interpretations and realities will be exactly the same.

I will attempt to understand, interpret and describe the journey of LSEN through the lenses of their educators, parents and education officials. By gaining information about educators' perceptions of their physical, emotional, psychosocial and scholastic development, an understanding of their progress will be formed to explore the degree to which the system has met the learners' developmental needs. Through interpretivism, knowledge will be gained from adults' interpretations of how the LSEN interact with each other, their peer groups, the educators and their communities. The way they rely on others to help create their building blocks will be investigated. Furthermore, I hope to find out to what extent does learning from others in the inclusive school system helps them to develop and progress to construct their own knowledge and realities.

The goal of research within this paradigm is well-defined as describing and understanding, rather than explaining and predicting human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I will strive to understand and describe my findings by following a systems approach.

4.3.2 Systems approach

A system considers a broad view of a situation, taking into account all the interlinking smaller subsystems including events, patterns and structures (things that can be linked together) through a set of methods or techniques to analyse and understand the processes in a real-world situation (Checkland, 1981). A systems approach in qualitative research is a way to organise data to help the researcher make sense of the data (Patton, 1990).

Following the systems approach the researcher needs to analyse the system's objectives, environment, resources, components and the management of the system (Checkland, 1981). A soft systems approach is often used in qualitative research, aiming towards a better understanding of human behaviour, rather than predicting and controlling the environment as in a hard systems approach. Goede (2006) explains

that such a systems approach from a social relativist perspective means that the system's objectives derive from the perceptions of participants. Therefore, there is no single reality, but only different perceptions to give the researcher a deeper understanding and clarify the situation through participants' perceptions of the world.

An education system consists of different levels from schools to district offices through to the provincial and national offices. The ability of the different subsystems to interact will determine the functionality of the entire system. When implementing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems approach, the community, school and the parents as well as other stakeholders form part of the system. In planning this research design, a systems approach seemed helpful to understanding the functioning of the IE system in including learners with barriers to learning, the environment of participants in the subsystems relating to the objectives of the broader system, and the resources available to reach these objectives; and the management of the system in the process of interlinking all the components of the subsystems to achieve the expected outcomes. All these interacting elements in the system (Rosa & Tudge, 2013) enabled me to identify possible challenges in the system that might influence the functioning of the broader system.

Systems thinking was important to understand the necessity for collaboration and coordination of the multiple aspects of the different departments in education and other stakeholders and the organisational management thereof (Rosa & Tudge, 2013) In the research to be described below, I will follow a systems approach to understanding the interaction and interdependence of internal and external factors in the education system, influencing the development and scholastic progress of the learners with barriers to learning in their first formal year of schooling (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2001, p.55) describes a research design as a "plan or a blueprint" for conducting the research. The researcher, therefore, indicates what data is going to be gathered, where and how the data will be gathered and analysed, and who is going to participate. Creswell (2012) emphasises that the researcher must consider the

participants' views and meanings and describe them in a natural context. The reasons for selecting participants and the target group, who they are and how and why they were chosen (sampling) must be also stated. Cohen et. al. (2011) state that when designing your research project you must consider the significance, the purpose of your research project and the intended outcome.

King (2017) distinguish between methodology and methods in research design. He describes methodology as the process of design, while methods are the techniques and procedures followed in collecting and analysing data.

The research was conducted in different phases. Firstly, three schools were selected to participate in the research. These specific schools were selected to maximise diversity (see sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.3). The learner profiles (Appendix O) were accessed to assist in the selection of learners with barriers to learning in the grade one year, in the three selected Primary schools. The class educators were consulted to identify and confirm the selected learners. Thereafter parents' permission was obtained to use documentary data and the learner profiler of the selected learners as part of the research. The parents also gave permission that their children's information may be used anonymously as part of the research (Appendix H). Thereafter parents' consent was gained to participate in the research (Appendix G). A framework of the research plan is set out in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Research Plan

Phase 1: Introduction and identification	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introductory interviews with the principals and participating educators<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain the purpose of the study2. Documentary analysis<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant archival background information• Learner profiles• School readiness tests• Available Baseline assessments• SIAS documents3. Educator questionnaires4. District official questionnaires5. Exploratory Educator and principal interviews
Phase 2: Record of participants’ perceived experiences of learners’ progress throughout the year	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Educator interviews and focus group2. Questionnaires on learner development by end of phase 23. Educators and Parents Focus groups4. Educator monitors progress: report cards, daily activities, workbooks, and classroom/peer group interaction.5. Monitor social and emotional growth through observation and daily notes by the educator in the learner’s profiler6. Focus group: District Support officials
Phase 3: Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Outcomes-based progress will be measured according to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The child’s ability and• in comparison to the norm• Scholastic criteria and outcomes as stipulated in the syllabus for Grade One2. Educator questionnaires on learners will be analysed and final interviews with the participating educators will be completed3. Data analysis and interpretation

Phase one describes the introductory interviews and the identification of participants. It includes the documentary analysis to assist in the identification of learners with barriers to learning. The educator and district officials' questionnaires are included to give the researcher a better understanding of the participants. This is followed by exploratory interviews to gain a better understanding of the schools and classrooms.

Phase two describes the record of participants' perceived experiences of learner progress through the year. It includes the questionnaires on learner development, focus group interviews and fieldnotes during visits to the school to monitor participants' views on learner progress,

Phase three includes the analysis and interpretation of data to determine the progress of selected learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive system.

4.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process includes problem identification, literature review, purposeful sampling, collecting and analysing data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). By abiding with ethical codes I strive to enhance data through qualitative methods and techniques to see the key aspect of the case more clearly (Hossain, 2011).

4.5.1 Ethical considerations

Research ethics promotes trustworthiness by expanding knowledge through social and moral values and principles of mutual respect and fairness, without harming others (Resnik, 2018). Moral pluralism provides reasonable guidance where the research must be founded on trust between participants, investigators and institutions to resolve ethical dilemmas in research with human participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2011) described ethical measures to be considered as including: gaining ethical clearance, informed consent from participants, the confidentiality of data, avoiding deception, the anonymity of participants, respecting the privacy of participants, and avoiding harm to subjects. These measures will be explored in what follows.

This thesis strived to adhere to ethical principles as stipulated in the ethical standards of Rhodes University. The ethics application covered these aspects: the purpose of the research; descriptor of each method of data collection and type and characteristics of the sample; the nature of the interaction(s), their frequency and duration, the procedure(s) involved; recruitment details and the nature of the information to be gathered; the gaining of permissions, consent and assent; the means of providing privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of data; data management, storage and use; risks and benefits of the research; and any conflicts of interest. Before starting with my research study, I applied for initial ethical clearance from the institutional review board of Rhodes University. After receiving initial clearance, I had to obtain Gatekeepers' permission (Appendix A) from the department of education.

Gatekeeper's permission (Appendix A) was firstly gained from the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Before granting me formal access to research schools, they needed to establish that my study did not pose risks to any schools, learners, educators or district officials in the department. Thereafter the final ethical clearance letter (Appendix B) for this research was obtained from the institutional review board of Rhodes University.

As a registered psychologist, I was also bound to the Ethical Rules of Conduct as stipulated in the Health Professions Act of 1974 (HPCSA, 2005). The dignity and welfare of all participants were maintained. Participants were protected from any unnecessary risks, potential harm, or mental and physical discomfort. I adhered to the participants' rights to privacy, dignity, self-determination, confidentiality, and anonymity. No research was done without the informed consent of participants (Miller, 2007).

Three schools were selected through purposive sampling by choosing diverse schools (see 4.5.2). All participants gave informed consent (Appendixes E, F, G, H) before the study was conducted (Creswell, 2012).

Confidentiality matters to be considered were described by Johnson and Christensen (2011), therefore participants were informed of the procedures, risks and benefits of the study before the focus group interviews were conducted. I explained what their

participation entailed, their privacy rights, our roles in keeping confidentiality and the reasonably foreseeable risks. They understood that they never needed to reveal information they were not comfortable with. To avert exploitation of participants I explained that participation is voluntary, that participation cannot be coerced against their will, and their options to withdraw from the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) or retract their data at any time during the research. Permission was gained from participants to audio-record focus groups, and responses to individual interviews were written down as fieldnotes. No recordings were conducted without the consent of the participants. Written data and field notes were safely stored in a lockable cabinet to ensure confidentiality. Data confidentiality was also protected through storage upon a password-protected computer.

The steps that were taken by me to protect participants and ensure anonymity and confidentiality were discussed at each meeting. Educators and district officials' identities were not revealed, and the school's settings stayed anonymous, to avoid any possible unintended consequences for them. Identified LSEN learners and their parents' information were not revealed in reports or records. I ensured that data could not be linked to any participant or subject (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). Codes were used for participants and selected schools as well as the subjects involved, to protect their privacy.

4.5.2 Sampling

When selecting data sources, it was important to choose informed people to give information about the topic (Merriam, 2002). The data to be collected must be sufficiently rich to bring refinement and clarity to understanding the research question (Wellington, 2000). In this study, purposive sampling was used (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) as I purposefully selected schools and participants for their predetermined features.

I decided to choose a relatively small but representative sample of schools and participants to gain an in-depth understanding of the developmental progress of grade one LSEN in the inclusive system. The choice of the selected schools was to obtain diverse and sufficient information that enabled me to reach an informed conclusion

that might be generalised to similar Eastern Cape rural primary schools. The limitation of this sample was that it is small and might not represent the situation for all schools in the Province. Three schools were selected to participate in this research study as a collective sample, to cover all the mainstream sections of basic education and ensure diversity. The selected schools were a fee-paying school (section 5.1.1), a Quintile 3 previously disadvantaged school (section 5.1.2) and a Full-Service school (section 5.1.3).

I obtained information-rich data to pursue the research questions by choosing two schools from historically different circumstances. One school was previously a school only for white learners and the other was a previously disadvantaged township school. Currently, these schools are also in different quintiles, where the one school is a quintile 5 school with more available resources and governing body-employed educators that enable them to have smaller classes and offer extended support to learners. The other school is a quintile 3 school with fewer resources available and no governing body-employed educators (viz. supplementary staff members). However, this school does have a learner support agent to assist mostly with learners' social-emotional challenges. The third school is a Full-Service school. This type of school is supposed to have all professional support staff (including Allied Health Professionals) appointed and in place to offer diverse support to learners with barriers to learning (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2010). This school is allowed to admit one-third of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. However, in reality, this school lacks the support staff and resources that were promised by EWP6. By choosing these three schools I aimed to gain a sample of practice from a diverse set of schools, which may give a sense of the broader contexts of schools in the Eastern Cape with similar sets of circumstances. In selecting these schools, I was able to compare practices and support systems in the different schools.

The Grade 1 year represents the entrance level to formal education. Therefore, ideas about the successes or failures of the system at the entry level will influence the future progress of these learners. The Grade 1 educators were chosen as participants because they were the experts in the classroom: being able to give a rich and comprehensive description of their experiences of the situation in their classrooms, and the development and progress of these learners. The educators were selected

because they cover a range of characteristics: from younger educators who were trained in the inclusive system but have less experience, to older and highly experienced educators, who had not been provided with initial teacher training on the inclusive system. The chosen district officials formed part of the specialised IE support team (ESSS) that had roles to support schools with their LSEN. The emphasis is therefore not on the amount of data that is gathered or the number of sources but how information-rich the sources are (Patton, 2005).

In the EC province, the majority of people are isiXhosa-speaking. However, since the particular district in which I was working also has a large number of disadvantaged people who are Afrikaans-speaking, the area covered by these three chosen schools did not contain a school in which isiXhosa was the dominant language. There are however isiXhosa-speaking learners in all three of the selected schools, because parents perceive that their children will benefit from being exposed to either English or Afrikaans tuition from grade 1 (rather than at a later stage, as in isiXhosa-dominant schools). This leads to a further unexpected element (when planning the research) related to Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), in relation to some children whose home language was neither English nor Afrikaans. This will be referred to further in the Discussion chapter.

I now describe the features of the three schools referred to above. The selection of these specific schools was to promote diversity as previously explained in this section. Although all three schools were mainstream schools, they have historical and current differences. The following table provides a comparison between the schools.

Table 4.2: Comparison of selected schools

Scholastic Information	School 1	School 2	School 3
Quintile of the school	5	3	3
	Fee-paying mainstream school	Non-fee-paying mainstream School	Non-fee paying Full-Service mainstream school
Total learners	985	460	433
LoLT	English/Afrikaans	English/Afrikaans	English/Afrikaans
Nutrition scheme	no	yes	yes
Permanent educators	23	11	12
Governing body funded educators	6	0	0
Grade 1 classes	2	2	2
Number of learners in Classroom1	24	36	28
Number of LSEN in classroom 1	4	13	16
Number of learners in classroom 2	23	35	32
Number of LSEN in class 2	3	10	13
Remedial educators	1 every 2nd week	0	0
Class assistant	0	0	0
LSA	0	1	1
ECD practitioner	1	1	1
Grade R class	1	2	1

School 1

School 1 was a previous Model C school. Model C schools (established towards the end of the apartheid regime) were schools located in white communities and were better equipped and financed than the township schools, which provided for the majority of black learners. In the transition to democratic rule, these schools chose to follow “Model C” because they then incorporated learners and educators from other

ethnic groups. Such schools are more dependent on the parent body for funding than other categories of schools. The community served by this school is more affluent than those of the other two schools. There are additional educators employed through the school's governing body. These educators enable the school to have smaller class groups. It is a fee-paying, dual medium school, with English and Afrikaans as the LoLT. In the current regime, this school qualifies as a Quintile 5 school, meaning it receives less funding from the government than the other two schools.

This was a combined school (primary and secondary) with 985 learners in the school. The school had 23 government-paid and 6 governing body-paid (from the school's own funds) educators. The school did not have an appointed remedial educator, to assist learners in need. A private remedial educator was paid out of the school's own funds to attend every second week to assist learners with barriers.

The school had 47 Grade 1 learners divided into two classes with 24 and 23 learners per class. Each classroom had one educator without any classroom assistants. Learners from both languages (i.e., English and Afrikaans) were combined in a class. Although the school's LoLT is both English and Afrikaans, there were also isiXhosa-speaking learners in both classrooms. On consultation with the educators, one class had four learners identified as having barriers to learning, whilst the other class had three identified learners.

School 2

School 2 is located in a previously disadvantaged township. It is a quintile 3, non-fee-paying school. The LoLT are both Afrikaans and English: while the school's feeder area is mostly Afrikaans-speaking, there were also isiXhosa-speaking learners in the school. There were two Grade 1 educators, and no teacher assistants or remedial educators.

The school was a primary school. The school had 11 government-paid educators and 1 governing body-paid (from the school's own funds) person, but not qualified as an educator. This person was appointed to teach in a Grade R class. The DoE only provides one Early Childhood Development (ECD) educator, but the Grade R group of learners admitted was too many for one class. The reason provided by the principal

for admitting so many learners was that they strive to provide pre-school education for all learners prior to Grade 1.

The school had 71 Grade 1 learners divided into 2 classes with 36 and 35 learners per classroom, respectively. The one class had 3 high needs and 10 moderate needs learners, while the second class had 5 high needs and 5 moderate needs learners, as identified by the educators. There were also many low needs learners identified by educators, but not included in this study. Each classroom had one educator without any classroom assistants. The school also did not have an appointed remedial educator, to assist learners in need.

All learners of the school benefitted from the nutrition programme, provided nationally by DoE for all Quintile 1 to 3 schools. Through this programme, learners received at least one healthy meal per day at the school.

School 3

School 3 is a registered Full-Service inclusive school that caters for learners with barriers to learning, meaning the school should be fully equipped to cater for a third of the learners having barriers to learning. One-third of the learners in the school are registered as LSEN. The school is situated in a less affluent community. Because it is categorised as a Full-Service school it receives more money from the government than the other two schools. Although the school's LoLT are both English and Afrikaans, there were also IsiXhosa-speaking learners in both classrooms.

The school had 460 learners in the school, with 12 government-paid educators. The 60 grade 1 learners were divided into two classes with 28 and 32 learners per class. On consultation, the one class had 6 high needs and 10 low to moderate needs learners, while the second class had 4 high needs and 9 moderate needs learners, as identified by educators. There were also several low needs learners identified by educators, but these were not included in this study. Each classroom had one educator without any classroom assistants. The school also did not have an appointed remedial educator, to assist learners in need. The school had one learner support agent, this is a person with a matric certificate, employed by the department to assist

the learners and educators in the school. These agents are mostly used by the school for administrative tasks.

All learners of the school benefitted from the nutrition programme, provided by DoE for all Quintile 1 to 3 schools. As noted earlier, through this programme, learners received at least one healthy meal per day at the school.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

4.6.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis is used to analyse and interpret content, to gain knowledge from documents (Bowen, 2009), based on data from sources where the researcher was not involved (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It is regularly used in qualitative research or case studies and can complement other research methods as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009), but should not be used as “surrogates” for other kinds of data. This means that the researcher can use a combination of methods and sources for example interviews, focus groups and observations, as complementary evidence and in doing so strengthen credibility.

Document analysis in this study provided background information as supplementary data (Bowen, 2009), through tracking the development of learners to support participants’ identification and findings in relation to learners with barriers to learning. A systematic review of the “Road to Health Card” from birth to date helped me to gain knowledge on the developmental history of the learners. A copy of this card is stored in school and used as a tool by doctors and nurses to monitor the development of a child. These assessments explore whether the learner will benefit from formal schooling by assessing the physical, sensory, motor development and cognitive aspects of school readiness. School readiness assessments supported the educators in identifying learners with barriers and also confirmed the developmental and scholastic challenges of the selected learners. The “Learner Profile” further supported the educator’s findings and provided empirical data on the progress of the learners.

The data gained from documents, without the researcher's intervention, must be interpreted to gain knowledge for empirical data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Document analysis was used to systematically analyse the content of documents to gain insight into the developmental history and progress of each learner. The documents provided background information by means of tracking the development. They provided supplementary data in supporting and verifying educators' identification of selected learners.

Through the Learner Profiler, the following documentation was accessed:

- The Road to Health medical Card;
- All medical and assistive therapy reports available on the learner file;
- Progress of learner through report cards, monitoring reports and educator comments;
- Psycho-Social information through educator comments and recommendation
- School-Readiness tests;
- SIAS document and process through Screening Needs Assessment forms;
- Record of absenteeism.

Attempting to gain rich information, individual interviews, focus group interviews and questionnaires were subsequently used as other methods, to corroborate and compare the information generated by these means.

4.6.2 Interviews

Interviews are one of the methods commonly used as an important source to gain rich information (King & Brooks, 2017). Interviews are flexible, but a powerful tool (Cohen et al., 2011) to generate meaningful data by providing useful historical information and social situatedness of current information for knowledge production.

Interviews can be unstructured, semi-structured or structured (Banister et al., 2011). For this research, I used unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews were exploratory, used for the respective school principals' interviews to gain information on their schools. Following the semi-structured focus group interview

with educators, face to face unstructured individual interviews were also conducted to gain information on learner progress. The unstructured interviews took the form of informal conversational interactions. The strength of these was that the interviews could be adapted considering the different circumstances of the schools; and by doing so they increased the salience and relevance of questions (Patton, 1999). The weakness was that these tools are less systematic, which somewhat complicated data organization and analysis.

Semi-structured interviews for the focus groups enabled me to control the event but allowed me to observe verbal and non-verbal communication (Cohen et al. 2011), through structured but also spontaneous communication. These interviews took the form of an open-ended interview (Patton, 1990) that allowed me to control the sequence of questions and therefore being able to close gaps in the data. These also allowed participants to express their viewpoints and experiences by allowing them to convey as much detail as they liked (Turner, 2010). The interview schedule for the individual and focus group interviews as planned may be found in Appendix N. I tried to limit the possible constraints on naturalness for individuals by allowing them the option to discuss any of the questions in the follow up individual interviews.

As indicated in table 4.1, the initial interviews during the first phase with the principals, educators and district officials were to introduce and explain the purpose and the ethical considerations of the research. After the introductory interviews, focus group interviews were held with the educator participants and thereafter with the parents and district officials, in turn, to gain the required information.

4.6.3 Focus groups

Focus group interviews with a group of people allow the researcher to explore discussions on a variety of views and complex ideas from participants in their social environments. These discussions need to be carefully planned when choosing the identity of participants, the number of participants, the location and the structuring of the questions and focus group, to gain rich data (Banister et al., 2011). The researcher needs to be aware of potential difficulties, for example taking into account the

personalities of participants, the role played by the interviewer, managing the flow (balanced between free-flowing and keeping on track), in guiding the sessions.

The focus group interviews with informed participants helped me to gain rich information, and explore (Cohen, et al, 2011) the IE system's capacity to support LSEN to succeed. The focus group interviews were conducted according to the planned interview schedule (Appendix N). These interviews were conducted according to the phases in the research plan (Table 4.1), as submitted to the ethics board. Whereas one focus group was held with the educators and the district officials respectively, three parents' focus groups were conducted, one with each school's parents. Through the parent focus groups, I obtained a better understanding of the community and parents as part of the meso-system, and the roles they play in the progress and the development of their children. It also gave me a clearer concept of the challenges experienced by the community in this district.

4.6.4 Observations

Robson (2011) describes some advantages and disadvantages of observation. Data from direct observation might complement or contrast with other information gained by any other techniques. One of the advantages is that it shows a real-life situation in the real world. A disadvantage might be reactions when participants realise that they are observed.

In this study, observation in class was only used as a natural process, being part of my visits and support in classrooms. It helped me to confirm or question other information gained from educators, for example the pacesetters in the curriculum. Since I visited the schools and classrooms often as part of my support for schools, learners' reactions were minimised. Observations in the classroom were held during the school visits. These observations helped me to substantiate the findings of the teacher's observation of the learner and supported me in constructing my questions during the discussion on the progress of the learners.

4.6.5 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are often used in qualitative research as part of research methods to gain information and data from and about people, through open- or close-ended questions (Robson, 2011). Questionnaires were first used to answer questions “objectively”, but in the late twentieth century, the perspective changed (Eckerdal & Hagstrom, 2017) to participants being allowed to describe and answer according to their own perceived experiences. As participants are not passive in giving information, questionnaires intrude in many ways, therefore the researcher must be careful and sensitive at all stages when using them (Cohen et al, 2011), according to ethical requirements. This means care at each stage, from planning and conducting, to analysing and interpreting resultant data.

Questionnaires can be used as a survey for self-completion, in the absence of the researcher or a face-to-face interview, where the interviewer asks the questions (Robson, 2011). The risk of the self-completion survey might be a misinterpretation or not understanding a question by the respondent. I overcame this by a follow-up face-to-face interview with the educators to clarify the data collected from them.

Initial educator questionnaires were conducted to understand and gain relevant information on the qualifications and experience of the grade one educators (Appendix J). The questionnaires were given to the educators to complete. This information supported me in understanding the personal and professional challenges of the educator participants. Although the questionnaire on learner development (Appendix I) was handed out and explained to the educator in the first phase, it was only completed during the second phase of the research to ensure that the educator understood the learners’ barriers and knew the children in her class. The questionnaires on learner development were administered by the educators and they used their curriculum guidelines to monitor the progress of the selected learners. The teachers also had the opportunity to discuss any concerns or challenges in the questionnaires during my three-weekly visits to the schools.

I alternated my visits to the schools throughout the year, meaning each school was visited every third week until the end of the school year (Appendix N), alternating

between schools to discuss learner progress and interpret educator reports and their observations of learners with barriers in their classrooms. Visits to schools were suspended during the school holidays, therefore each school was visited on three occasions. Field notes were made during these visits.

4.6.6 Details of Data Collection

Principals

School principals participated, to give me an understanding of the school management and support systems that are offered in the inclusive system. Two interviews were held with each of the three principals. The first interviews were introductory after I received ethical clearance. These interviews were to explain the research and get permission from the teachers to participate in the study. I delivered the permission to participate letters and explained the research objectives and goals. The second interviews occurred after I received permission to conduct the research in their schools. These interviews were aimed at collecting information on the school system and the schools' abilities to offer quality education and support to the learners with barriers to learning. The three principals offered enough information for me to understand their school's relation to the department and their perceptions of the benefits and shortcomings of the system in providing necessary resources to the school. The principals also offered background information on their parents and communities, as part of the micro- and meso-systems.

Educators

All the Grade 1 educators were identified. They were approached during the first interviews to participate. All the gr 1 teachers agreed to partake in the research. There were initially 7 participating educators, but one educator retired, and the study was completed with 6 participating educators. Two educators from each school participated. They provided clear information on the benefits and the inadequacies of the inclusive system through their experiences. This provided a thick understanding (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) of their experiences of dealing with the LSEN in the mainstream inclusive classroom.

Parents

The initial letters inviting parents to participate were sent to the selected learners' parents. The educators of the selected learners assisted with the letters going to parents and gaining their consent. Although forty-two invitations were sent to parents to participate in the focus groups, only eighteen parents participated in total. Parents were interviewed in focus groups during the second phase after the educators' focus group was completed. Semi-structured questions were used to gain insight into their perceptions of their children's progress and development in the school and their understanding of the inclusive system.

District officials

District-based specialists participated in a focus group to help me understand support structures and systems that are offered to schools. Six district officials from the Educational Support Services (ESSS) that formed part of the District Based Support Team (DBST) participated in the research project. These officials were selected as they fall under the sub directorate of IE and work according to the SIAS policy. Information was gained on their views of the LSEN in mainstream schools and the support offered to them. I gained information on their perceptions of the efficiency of integration at all levels of the system and the links between the district, provincial and national offices. They could also provide information on human and other resources offered.

The table below indicates the sequence of collecting data from participants.

Table 4.3: The sequence of data collection

Participants	Nature and frequency of interaction	Procedures
Principals	Interviews: Two with each principal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductory interview together with the educator participants to explain the nature of the study 2. The second interview obtained information applicable to the research such as learner educator ratio, assistive devices, structures in the school and education and any other information that will give me a clear understanding of the school setup.
Educators	2 Initial interviews 2 Questionnaires 1 Focus groups Continuous individual feedback on learner progresses every third week	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductory interview to explain procedures 2. One interview with each educator participant to understand the class setup. 3. Educators Questionnaires to be completed in the first phase. The development questionnaire to be completed in the second phase. 4. Informal individual interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explain advantages and/or disadvantages in the classroom and experience of the inclusive system - progress of selected learners
District	1 Focus group 1 Interview	A semi-structured focus group interview. Individual participants
Parents of LSEN	3 Focus groups	Semi-structured. A focus group with each school's parents

Interviews with educators started with an informal interview, describing my research topic and procedures. I also asked for permission and provided them with letters for participation (Appendix E). After consent, a second interview with the two participating educators of each school was held separately to observe and gain information on the class setup, as well as explaining the selection of learners. Thereafter the educators' focus group followed, including the six educator participants of the three selected schools. The focus group took the form of a semi-structured interview (Appendix K). The educators chose the venue that was the most convenient for all of them. The venue was a quiet restaurant with more or less the same travelling distance for all the

schools. The veranda area was booked to insure privacy for participants. Informal follow-up reflective interviews were conducted every third week, alternating between the three schools. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to reflect on the progress of learners. These interviews also helped me to clarify the interpretation of information that I was not certain of, as gained in the focus group.

After the educators' focus group, the three semi-structured focus groups (Appendix L) were conducted with parents. One focus group with each school's parents was held separately, at their children's school premises.

District officials had a semi-structured focus group interview (Appendix M) in the district office boardroom. This was followed by informal interviews with each individual to gain clarity on any uncertainties. Member checking as a technique to explore credibility was used to improve the quality of data, by discussing the results of the data with participants and confirming the accuracy of the results (Birt et al., 2016).

4.6.7 Data management

I gained access to the documentary information at the schools. Any copies made by me were destroyed afterwards as the original Learner Profilers stay with the school until learners exit school. Hard copies of data such as interview transcripts, questionnaires and any other written information were stored in files relating to participating schools and districts, with subsections for each participant as required. These were all stored in a locked cabinet. Digital recordings were stored on a password-protected computer. After completion of the transcriptions and data analysis, the recordings were destroyed (Banister et al., 2011). Notes and data analysis and procedures were stored in a similar manner in a research file on the computer.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysing data gives a basis for interpreting messages from their often-concealed raw form (Robson, 2011). There are several methods of analysing data in qualitative research. In this research study, template analysis (King, 2012) was used.

Brooks and King (2014) describe template analysis as flexible, not referring to a definite or specific methodology, but rather to varied techniques that can be used in different qualitative approaches. I chose template analysis to form categories by grouping significant data into themes and subthemes as guided by my research questions (Brooks et al., 2015). By doing so I could structure and balance the analytic process (King, 2012). Focus group, classroom observations by the educators, educator discussions, field notes and free-response items were incorporated into data analysis.

Audio recordings were used during my focus groups interviews. Therefore, I first needed to transcribe and translate these recordings before I could start with my analysis of the raw data. According to Banister et al. (2011), several things need to be considered on deciding to use audio-recordings, such as the quality of your recording device, a quiet venue and ensuring not for other persons to overhear the group conversations. The benefits for researchers in doing their own transcriptions, although time-consuming, is that it helps them to know the data better and helps to reflect on their role as the interviewer. I started transcribing after each focus group interview, when discussions were still salient. Word for word translation was done after the original transcriptions were completed, this made it easier to compare the translation with the original comment in writing up.

Brooks and King (2014) recommend several steps to analyse data by firstly preparing and organising your data (transcripts, notes, documents). After that, the data need to be reviewed and explored then creating initial codes. Lastly, review those codes again and combine them into themes in a cohesive manner. After organising my data, I planned my initial template using my research questions as the broad themes. Possible sub-themes according to my questions emerged from there. From the selected themes, I categorised the relevant information under these topics. Through

this method, certain patterns were formed and identified that enabled me to adapt themes or sub-themes where necessary. The first step was to define the repetitive perceptions and experiences of participants that were relevant to the research and group them. Thereafter hierarchical coding was done where similar codes were group together to form subthemes. Revising was done, to make sure relevant important information was included.

Verbatim quotations, without changing participants' usage of language, supported the findings. Participants could use their language of choice, either Afrikaans or English. Afrikaans quotations were translated into English by me, (placed in brackets in the Findings). Since I am fully bilingual, cross-translation was not deemed necessary.

4.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Robson (2011), trustworthiness is a subject of debate, as some positivistic researchers question the reliability and validity in qualitative research, where flexible designs in real-world studies with people are involved. However, qualitative researchers such as Morse (1999) reason that qualitative research is part of social science and has a number of safeguards, therefore can be considered reliable and valid. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed different terms to describe reliability and validity in qualitative research such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Robson (2011) argues that the ways to describe reliability and validity in qualitative research must be suitable, according to the circumstances and conditions of the research. Certain principles contribute towards trustfulness and validity when working with qualitative data (Cohen et al., 2011). To ensure trustworthiness, all procedures need to be documented through the recommended validation procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Internal validity is when the evidence provided by the description and explanation in the research study can be supported by the presented data (Cohen et al., 2011). The description needs to be accurate and one of the ways to ensure accuracy is through audio-tape (Robson, 2011). The interpretation and explanation must be justified and supported by the evidence from the data (Mason, 1996).

External validity is achieved through the findings being applied and generalised to the population in general and implies the “transferability of the findings” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 183). Although this study was concerned with understanding and explaining a phenomenon in certain schools in a certain district, findings might be similar for other schools and districts where there are similar circumstances.

In this study, I aimed to collect thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through focus group discussions and interviews with participants. I was aware of the possibility of researcher bias and therefore rigorously checked for the differences in behaviours of participants and refrained from getting too closely involved with participants. I strived to ensure trustworthiness by purposive sampling, collecting rich data (Johnson & Christensen, 2011) through informed participants and triangulation (Bless et al., 2013). Trustworthiness was further ensured by adhering to the fundamental components of honesty as explained below (Lincoln & Guba 1985), namely credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

4.8.1 Credibility

I maintained credibility in this qualitative study by making use of collecting data from multiple sources, multiple interviews with educators, field notes, observations, focus groups and questionnaires (Patton, 1999). Through this process, I endeavoured to understand the participants' meaning-making and their interpretations of their reality and then to link these with the research findings. The obtained information was confirmed by participants before being used in the study to clarify any misunderstandings or misinterpretations of data by me.

I made use of data source triangulation and used multiple referents and various sources and methods of collecting data (Polit & Beck, 2012) to draw conclusions and strive to distinguish valid information to enhance credibility. Furthermore, I collected data by utilising individual and focus group interviews with different groups of

participants to gain in-depth information. Focus groups were held to gain diverse information and perspectives (Brown, 1999). Interviews and focus groups complemented each other to gain various perspectives on resources, values and issues (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001). Since Morse (2009) mentions a combination of methods in qualitative research might threaten trustworthiness, I strived to analyse data separately; then to synthesise and identify similarities and differences that occurred within the different methods to develop my findings and discussion thereof.

4.8.2 Dependability

Well-established research methods will be used in collecting data and analysis of data to ensure accuracy and consistency. Van der Riet and Durrheim (2006) explain that dependability occurs when the study convinces the reader that the process and findings are an accurate account of events and happened as described by the researcher. In this study, all recorded data were organised, summarised and interpreted (McMillan & Shumacher, 2006) to reflect the real-life situation as experienced by the educators, district officials and parents. Well-established research methods were used in collecting data and analysis of data to ensure accuracy and consistency.

4.8.3 Transferability

In this study, I have aimed to give an extensive and detailed report of experiences during data collection. Lincoln and Guba (1985) comment that transferability is enhanced by a thick description of the situation, therefore I strived to give an extensive and detailed report of experiences during data collection. By purposive sampling and purposeful selection of participants for this study, I tried to ensure transferability where the findings can be applied with other respondents or in other contexts (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability can be enhanced by ensuring findings derive from data by taking a neutral stance, and not from the “figments of the inquirer’s imagination” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). I supported confirmability by doing my best to maintain neutrality and a proper record of evidence. As I am also employed by the DoE extra precautions were taken to remain as objective as possible. I used reflexivity during

data collection and analysis to strive to confront potential bias. I refrained from close involvement with participants.

4.9 CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND REFLECTIONS

Although I am employed as a psychologist in the DoE, I did not undertake the research as an agent of the DoE or any other organisation. The study was conducted as a private individual and conducted within the ethical and professional boundaries applicable to my profession as a registered Educational Psychologist with the HPCSA. I was therefore bound to develop the research ethically and present the findings authentically. All findings are supported by the evidence as generated, with supporting quotations provided wherever possible. Although a conflict seems apparent between my research and being a worker in the DoE, the very purpose of this research was to act in the best interest of children and not any other party. If the research indicates that the current system needs adjustment to better serve learners with barriers to learning, such findings are also in line with the very mandate of the DoE, who may benefit from the results by adjusting the system.

As I am employed as a psychologist for the DoE there were some challenges in conducting the research. My research was double-edged, as some of the participants were known to me. That could encourage some familiarity and could encourage participants to feel relaxed and motivated to talk and assist, but there was also the possibility of them not wanting to be too critical, as that may have seemed to be bad-mannered.

When designing the program, I had to be aware that I am the psychologist in the district office's inclusive section and had my own ideas on the situation in schools. Therefore, I had to be extra careful not to make any leading suggestions or let participants be aware of my perspectives of the inclusive system. I strived to reflect on information gained from participants and not to make any suggestions in focus groups or interviews.

When entering the inclusive system in the Sarah Baartman District I realised that it was a unique, mostly rural setting with scarce resources and many challenges. Initially, I was angry and discouraged as well as being shocked to see the overcrowded Grade 1 classrooms and thought that schools should organise themselves better to provide for their learners. I interpreted the educators' tiredness as not being positive or a possible lack of creativity.

As the research developed, I soon realised that my first impressions were far from an accurate perspective on the realities of the situations and the more my study evolved, the more I felt empathy for educators in schools. I also realised that what I had initially interpreted as negativity was rather feelings of hopelessness, together with very high stress levels in educators' efforts to provide for LSEN without the necessary resources. I realised that there was a need for adaptations and possible changes in the education system.

CHAPTER 5: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

5.1 PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

All schools in South Africa receive subsidies from DoE on a sliding scale according to the schools' quintile rating from 1 to 5, where quintile 5 schools will receive the least subsidy from the government. Quintiles 1 to 3 are non-fee paying schools, meaning these schools are not allowed to collect school fees from parents.

5.1.1 School 1

School 1 was a previously Model C school, serving the predominantly white community before 1994. Since then, the school became a multi-racial, dual-medium (where the two LoLT are English and Afrikaans), fee-paying school. Parents are obliged to pay the recommended school fees, as decided by the school's parent governing body. When a parent's income bracket falls under a certain category, the parents may apply at the DoE for a subsidy for their child. The subsidy received from the department is usually much less than the required school fees.

School 1 was categorised as a quintile 5 school and received less subsidy than the two other schools in this study. The school did yearly fund-raising by organising events like concerts and fetes. Some of the income from these was used for assistive devices and learning programmes that benefitted the learners.

The school precinct is neat with well-kept gardens and secure fencing. The building was of brick and well-maintained, with adequate and clean ablution blocks. There were sports fields, tennis courts and a swimming pool was accessible from a private institution in the town. The school competed in athletics and cultural activities with other schools in the Eastern Cape.

High academic standards were promoted by the school. There were additional educators at the school, employed by the school's governing body. A retired remedial educator delivered free remedial services every alternative week to the foundation

phase learners. After-care educators helped all learners from Grade R to Grade 3 with homework. Most learners in the school had attended pre-school and all learners attended Grade R. School readiness tests were conducted by the end of Grade R. These allowed educators to prepare their classrooms according to learner needs. No Grade 1 classroom had more than 24 learners.

The school involves other stakeholders in the community like for instance the Lions Club, a non-profitable charity organisation, to support selected learners financially, depending on their needs, for example remedial, medical, or psychological interventions. The Lions Club also sponsors all the Grade R learners to undergo a hearing test each year.

According to the principal, most parents were involved with their children's school activities by supporting and attending extracurricular sport and cultural activities, and events like Parents' Day.

Out of the total group of 47 grade one learners, there were seven learners identified with barriers to learning. Two learners were categorised as moderate needs and three learners as high needs learners. High needs learners were not placed in special schools as there was no space available in the relevant special schools, and parents felt that they were too small to be placed in a hostel. Financial consideration also played a role.

All the learners were assessed for school readiness and only these seven learners were not fully school ready but were already too old to keep them behind for another year in Grade R. Because the school readiness tests were conducted by the end of the Grade R year the educators could plan placement and classroom seating according to learner needs.

5.1.2 School 2

School 2 was in a previously disadvantaged township, rated at quintile 3, thus a non-fee-paying school. English and Afrikaans were the LoLT. The school buildings were newly built brick buildings, and the premises were neat and adequate for teaching.

The ablution blocks were clean and in working order. Although it is a newly built school with ample space, there were no sports facilities at the premises. The premises were secured by a fence with a security guard at the gate.

The post provision of educators was one educator for every 36 learners. The DoE, according to the post provision standards and regulations, only provided one qualified educator for the reception grade (Grade R). According to the principal, the demand for Grade R was high and only one Grade R classroom was not enough to meet the demands of the community. The school had to admit 64 learners and another Grade R classroom was established. There was one additional unqualified “educator” appointed for the second Grade R class group, paid out of funding received from the Grade R parents. Since it was a poor community, the SGB could not afford to pay an additional educator’s salary. Previously schools could apply for “growth” posts but this is no longer possible. Posts were allocated on the previous year’s learner numbers and not according to the new year’s intake.

There were no remedial educators available at the school. The school had one learner support agent (LSA). The LSA needed to support and assist learners from gr R to 7 mostly on social-emotional matters. The LSA’s highest qualification was Grade 12. She was young, under the age of 30 with no specific training on emotional or educational matters. The classrooms were big, and the smallest class contained 35 learners.

Although there were no private stakeholders involved, all learners at the school benefitted from the Department of Education’s nutrition programme. They received breakfast porridge during the short break in the morning and a nutritious meal during the second break.

Over 50% of the parent population were reportedly unemployed and received a children’s support grant from the government. Since this was a rural area with few job opportunities, most of the working parents went away to work in the bigger cities. Therefore, several learners lived with their grandparents or family members, who themselves had little formal education and limited literacy levels.

The school identified 20 learners with low needs, 15 learners with moderate needs and 8 learners with high needs.

Out of the group of 71 gr 1 learners, 56 learners were assessed for school readiness.

The results were as follows:

- The number of learners that tested not school-ready on school readiness test (ASB): 31.
- The number of learners with some developmental concerns: 12.
- The number of learners that were school ready: 12.

Forty-nine learners' LoLT was different from their home language and can be considered as low needs learners. Although LoLT plays a significant role in the gr 1 classroom where learners are introduced to a significant number of new concepts, the decision was made not to consider this in identifying the learner participant group. Therefore, only moderate to high needs learners were identified.

Twenty three learner participants were identified as LSEN with the highest number (14) of learners with barriers to learning identified as possible undiagnosed FAS. This information was mainly obtained through parent or guardian interviews. Seven of these 14 learners were identified as high needs learners.

5.1.3 School 3

School 3 was a registered Full-Service Inclusive school that catered for learners with barriers to learning. One-third of the learners in the school was registered as LSEN. It was a dual-medium school and English and Afrikaans were the LoLT. The precinct of the school although old had a neat appearance. The main building was a brick building but there were also separate prefabricated classrooms. Wheelchair ramps were built two years ago but there were no wheelchair-adapted toilets available. Classrooms were also not spacious enough to accommodate a wheelchair. The school had a wire fence. The gates were closed, but without any security guard.

The educator-learner ratio was one educator for 32 learners. Two remedial educator posts were allocated to the school by DoE, after applying for two years. Only one post was filled. Due to a shortage of staff, the remedial teacher also taught a Grade 2 class. There were also two assistants available for Grade R to Grade 7, to assist the

educators with administrative matters. The school had no therapists or psychologists in post and had minimal assistive devices to support learners. Class sizes were large, as a result of the educator-learner ratio. "Clicker read and write" was made available by the department to assist educators with individual support programmes. The clicker programme offered the possibility to teach learners on computers. It could also assist the educator to plan lessons and print the planned lesson according to learner needs. The challenge was that the classrooms were not fitted with desktop computers and educators complained that the programme was too cumbersome. The school also could not afford to pay for adequate internet services to support the programme. The fact that the school was situated in a rural area in a mostly poor community made it difficult for the school to do extra fundraising.

Except for the local clinic, there were no other professional practitioners available in the community. No private institutions were involved in supporting the school. All learners at the school benefitted from the Department of Education's nutrition programme (as in school 2). The departmental officials visited the school at least once a month, to assist with learner assessments.

Parents were mostly not fully involved with school activities. As was the case with the previous school, most parents worked away from home and grandparents were often the caretakers of the children. It seemed that alcohol abuse was high in this community.

The Full-Service School identified 17 learners with low needs, 19 learners with moderate needs and 10 learners with high needs.

Out of the group of 60 Grade 1 learners, 60 learners were assessed for school readiness. The results were as follows:

- Learners, not school-ready on the school readiness test (ASB): 28.
- Learners with some developmental concerns: 18.
- Learners that were school ready: 14.

Eight learners' LoLT was different from their home language and might be considered as low needs learners. Only moderate to high needs learners were considered and identified as participants.

Twenty-nine learner participants were identified as LSEN with 11 learners identified with undiagnosed FAS. This information was mainly obtained through educator, parent, or guardian interviews. Eight learners of this group were identified as high needs learners.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

5.2.1 The principals

The principals of participating schools all had more than 15 years of experience in Education. One principal was previously an educator in a model C school and became a principal 16 years ago. The other two principals were both previously educators at under-resourced schools: one principal had 10 years of experience as a principal and the other had six years of experience. All three principals indicated their willingness to participate in the research and to support investigations with their staff and parents.

5.2.2 The educators

The profile of the educators varied from educators with many years of experience to newly appointed educators with only one year of experience. Training also varied from the earlier Education College training to the latest training at universities on IE. Table 5.1 below shows the profile of each participating educator. The colours in the table will be used in chapter 6 to highlight the respective educators' comments.

Table 5.1: Profile of Educators

	SCHOOL 1		SCHOOL 2		SCHOOL3	
Identification of school	Previous model C fee-paying mainstream school		Non-fee-paying, previously disadvantaged area		Full-Service School, previously disadvantaged area	
Participants' code	Educator 1	Educator 2	Educator 3	Educator 4	Educator 5	Educator 6
	P1E	P2M	K1S	K2H	A1C	A2V
Qualification	J.P.T.D.	B.A.(Eng. + psych) PGCE	B.ED Foundation Phase	B.ED Foundation Phase	J.P.T.D.	B.ED Foundation Phase
Qualified for foundation phase	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Teaching experience	22 years	6	1	4	35	16
Knowledge or training to teach LSEN	No	No	No	No	No	No training, knowledge from experience
Confident to teach LSEN	Yes	Trying	No	Sort of	Yes	Yes
Stress scale (1=low; 5 =high)	3	5	4	4	4	4

The educators reported that none of them was trained to plan an Individual Support Plan (ISP). “No, although I use my own initiative because it is expected of the class teacher” (P2M). One of the more experienced educators said: “No formal guidelines. I try to plan the work on the level of development but are not trained in all the different learning styles for different barriers of learning” (A2V). It appeared that although there were no definite guidelines or training, the more experienced educators showed more confidence in planning an ISP.

5.2.3 The district officials

The participating district officials were part of the ESSS section and were responsible for learners with barriers to learning in the Sarah Baartman district. Their experience in working with learners with barriers to learning differed from the least experience of 10 years up to an extensive experience of 32 years.

The senior educational specialists' (SES) qualifications varied. Out of the four senior educational specialists, three were qualified educators. One participant had a Master's degree (M.Ed. Inclusive Education). One SES has a B Psych. qualification and an honours degree in criminology but without any teaching experience, although she had five years of experience working with vulnerable children. The Occupational Therapist had 11 years of experience in assessing children with barriers, eight years in the Department of Health (DoH) and three years' experience in the Department of Education (DoE), working directly with schools. The Audiologist had previous experience in the DoH and had three years of experience in the DoE. The Educational Psychologist had 32 years of experience in education working with learners with barriers to learning but was not considered part of the study to prevent possible bias.

Table 5.2 provides the profiles of the participating district officials.

Table 5.2: Profile of The District Officials in The Educational Support Services

Section

ESSS	Senior Educational Specialists				Professional therapists	
	1	2	3	4	Occupational Therapist	Audiologist
Identification code	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	PS1	PS2
Qualification	M.Ed. Inclusive Education	JPTD & ACE-remedial	B. Psych.	JPTD & remedial	BSc (OT)	BSc Audiology
Trained on SIAS Policy	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Experience relating LSEN	15	12	11	16	7	10
Confident to support educators on LSEN	Yes	Yes - but not on all disabilities	50%, as I am not trained	Yes, but only remedial work	Yes, but only in my speciality field	Only in my field of speciality
Ability to do ISPs	yes	yes	No, we were not trained	No, we were not trained	no	no
Number of schools to support	30+	30+	30+	30+	120+	120+
Stress scale where 1 is low and 5 is high All the district officials gave themselves a score of 4, except for one score of 3 and she explained that the reason was that she is leaving the education system and is more relaxed since taking that decision.						

Several factors contributed to the high stress levels of district officials; from time-consuming issues to lack of resources and systemic barriers experienced by them: *“I spend time on the road, long hours, taking up valuable time that could have been spent in schools assisting learners”* (S1). Other challenges seemed to be inadequate resources: *“We work without the necessary resources”* (S2). *I am working for 3 years in the DoE but have still not received an odometer or any assessment material. I must share with another district and borrow their equipment when it is available”* (PS2).

The high number of learners in a class combined with language barriers were stressful for officials to observe: *“Lack of human resources - people”* (S3). *“The educator-pupil ratio is too high - too many learners. Language barriers of learners in schools make learning difficult for them”* (S1). It also seems that the number of schools to be served by an SES, together with the belief that educators were not adequately trained contributed to raised stress levels: *“No resources - too many schools. Educators are not trained with many learners to support”* (S4F).

The therapist participant leaving the system sums up the situation in the following comment: *“I suppose I am more relaxed now because I’m leaving the DoE. The working circumstances are not conducive to any person’s health, and I could not visualise myself working another year under these conditions. You are expected to perform a task without considering all the ethical standards... Shortage of, and in most cases the lack of resources”* (PS1).

Participants believed that the support from the Provincial office was inadequate and rather made things more difficult, contributing to higher stress levels as seen in the following comments.

“There are no clear guidelines. We need to cancel programmes on very short notice, sometimes hours because head office demands a workshop and lets you know in the afternoon you must be there tomorrow - so schools don’t prepare for you because they are not sure whether you will visit or not. They wait until you are there. All of this is wasting valuable time that we don’t have” (S3). Another participant said: *“We work without the necessary resources in a vast district without support from head office, they don’t plan, and we always need to react on short notice, leaving everything you are busy with”* (S2).

The demands from the provincial office forced officials to cancel programmes and led to trust issues from schools due to officials not honouring appointments as noted above. The challenge of top-down orders to the district is summarised as follows:

“There is a gap between the head office and the district and schools. They seem to misunderstand, no report between them or any follow-up, no reflections never give feedback” (S1). *“Yes, Provincial and National do not apply their minds. Special schools are not resourced although these schools are supposed*

to be the resource centres”(S2). “No, not relevant support, I wish we can only have tools of the trade, which will be a good start” (PS2).

It appeared that departments worked in silos, without combined plans, resource management and time schedules between the National, Provincial, and District offices.

5.2.4 Parents

School 1:

The grade 1 educators identified seven learners with moderate to high needs. Four of the mothers of these learners took part in the research. All the parents were involved in their children’s school activities to a certain extent, through regular communication with the educator on the progress of their child. Three of the mothers had an occupation outside of the home, and four mothers were housewives. Two of the homes were single-parent homes. One child was formally assessed and received therapy from a private therapist. Although only one child was professionally diagnosed when entering grade 1, all the participating parents reported that they were aware that their children experienced a barrier to learning.

School 2:

Eight parents/caretakers of the 29 selected learners took part in the focus group. Eleven guardians were grandmothers looking after their grandchildren and only two of them participated. Reasons explained for learners being placed in foster care by the school and guardians varied from: alcohol abuse or/and physical abuse by the biological parent/s; parents leaving the children to find a job and never coming back; to parents working somewhere else and letting the children stay with their grandparents or family members. Most participants were biological single mothers, unemployed and receiving a social grant (these households did not earn any other income except for the grant provided by the government for each of their children). All participating parents were literate to a certain extent (varying from primary school certificate to matric), except for one of the grandmothers who could not read or write.

School 3:

The parents and guardians of school 3 were mostly in the lower range of the income group and experienced socio-economic challenges. All the parents/guardians signed

the consent forms to access and use the information on the identified children. Only six of the 32 identified children's parents/guardians participated in the parent focus group. All participating mothers or guardians were unemployed. Thirty-six per cent of the identified learners were raised by a family member as the guardian, mostly the grandmother or aunt. Reasons given by guardians for having children in their care varied from parents working away from home, parents abusing alcohol to neglected and abused children. All the participating parents/guardians could read and write.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND EXPLORATION OF THE FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Through a qualitative investigation, this study explored the implementation of the inclusive system in a district in the Eastern Cape; considering the influence of the system on the progress of entry level Grade 1 learners with barriers to learning. By collecting data through the learners' profile documents, I aimed to understand the children with barriers to learning, through their schooling experience, as developing human beings in totality. Through the information thus gained, I wanted to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the development of the identified learners and how their developmental progress compared to their peer groups. I aimed to gain a clearer idea of any links between the learners' challenges and their progress, in the inclusive system. From this I hoped to understand what is needed from the broader system, in attempting to provide equal education; to support the ideal of mainstreaming LSEN learners, to provide non-discriminating equal education.

Questionnaires completed by educators on learner development and interviews with principals, educators, district officials and parents helped me to establish in what ways LSEN benefitted from the current system; and the impact of the inclusive system on the learners' emotional, psychological, social, and physical wellbeing. Questionnaires by educators giving information on learners' progress gave me a more in-depth understanding of the challenges in education and the progress of learners in the inclusive classroom.

The information gathered was then substantiated by verbatim comments from participants. The findings of the research are presented and categorised under themes. The three main themes were chosen according to the three research questions as I analysed the data, by dividing up the material in the transcripts. All teachers mentioned certain topics. I reduced the data through colour coding to form and categorise subthemes that belonged together. Subthemes were placed under the relevant main themes. The following two chapters will cover the findings of the research, derived from analysing and interpreting relevant data by using template

analysis (King, 2017), to strive to respond to the research questions. Chapter 6 will present the information obtained through relevant documentation and questionnaires, while chapter 7 will analyse and interpret the data collected from focus groups and on-going interviews with the educator participants, over the course of the year.

6.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

I contacted the principals to gain permission to conduct research in their schools, and each was in agreement. The principals of each school were thereafter interviewed. They were mainly interviewed to give me a better understanding of the participating schools and the functioning of the schools in the inclusive system. The principals' responses were written down as field notes and some of the background information (as provided by them) was reported in chapter 5.

After the initial interviews with the principals, the participating educators were selected and invited to participate. Educators were requested to complete an educator questionnaire (Appendix J) and a questionnaire on the development of individual learners with barriers in their classrooms (Appendix I).

Focus group information was organised and analysed according to themes as previously described. King's (2012) steps of coding were incorporated to firstly become familiar with the data as described above. Secondly, themes were organised into clusters; and relations between groupings (Brooks & King, 2014) were established to form sub-themes. All data relevant to the subject were coded using colours (as noted in chapter 5) and then giving code labels to themes that belonged together.

6.3 PRINCIPALS' INTERVIEWS

The primary purpose of interviewing the principals was to gain clear information on the school's ability and means to implement the inclusive system as intended by the UN declaration (UN, 1998) and documented through the Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994a). I endeavoured to analyse to what extent learners with barriers to learning were affected by the inclusive system and benefit from the current education model. I gained

valuable information on the infrastructure of the school, staff establishment, learner educator ratio and extended support from the Department. This information enabled me to come to informed conclusions that relate to the efficiency of the current inclusive system.

6.3.1 School principals' feedback

School 1

Respondent 1 was the principal of a Quintile 5 fee-paying school. Their educator-learner ratio as allocated by the DoE is one teacher for 36 learners. Therefore, the DoE calculate the total number of learners in the school and allocate an educator for every 36 learners. Although the policy (DBE, 2010b) states that learners with barriers should be taken into account according to the severity of their disability when the Post Provision Model (PPM) is calculated, this was not the case in this school. The principal stated that the educator-learner ratio was inadequate for two reasons: firstly learners in the Foundation phase learn better when classes are small; secondly, the PPN is calculated on the current year's numbers without considering the future number of learners and the learners with barriers that will enter school. Therefore, the governing body employed six additional educators. According to the principal, the school needed at least two remedial educators as there were no private tutors available when a learner needed more support.

Although it was a fee-paying school, many parents cannot afford the fees, and the school did not receive any subsidies from the ECDoE for those learners. According to the principal they had applied for subsidies from the department many times before, but they have "*given up now*" and he suggested that it is only a waste of valuable time to apply for learner subsidies if you are a fee-paying school. Despite numerous meetings and applications for extending classroom numbers with the department, they did not support the school and there was still a shortage of classrooms. The school's governing body arranged for a remedial specialist to support learners once a week and according to the principal "*although it is not enough, this is all that we can do*". The services rendered by the remedial educator were provided for free due to the school's limited financial resources. He then continued:

“Oh yes, speaking of a remedial teacher, and... that brings me to that forms, what do you call it, SIAS... SNA forms. Your waiting list is long and so is the hospital's and Social Development. Child Welfare tells us they only take children under ten, it's a mess you know..., and who pays for private people, we can't as a school”.

What he is referring to here is that the educators complete the Screening Needs Assessment form (SNA) according to the SIAS policy but need to wait for a long time because of a lengthy waiting list before learners can be assessed by a practitioner. The reason for this seemed to be that all government departments were understaffed. The above statement seemed to summarise his frustration within a working environment where schools were under-resourced and support services in education and other government departments were inadequate and difficult to access. He experienced the process of screening, identification, assessment, and support for learners as a barrier rather than a supporting measurement, especially with the lack of remedial educators or professional support staff in the school.

According to the principal, the inclusive system is almost impossible to implement because of the non-commitment of the DoE:

“We can only render quality education for all learners if all stakeholders come to the party. Currently, the inclusive dream is just a wonderful idea on paper without any support from the government and the DoE”.

The principal stated that trained human resources and other material resources like assistive devices must be available at school, for the school to implement an individual support programme for learners with learning or other barriers. He concluded with the following statement:

“A medical centre will not operate without the necessary specialists and medical instruments. Why does the department expect schools to do it where we need to educate children to become specialists one day?”

It seemed that although the school was a fee-paying school and seemingly better resourced than non-fee paying schools, the principal was frustrated with the current system's functioning. Inadequate resources and specialised services placed an extra burden on the functionality of the school and resulted in his belief that the Government departments, including especially the DoE, had failed them.

School 2

Respondent 2 explained that the school experiences many systemic barriers starting from parents that need to pay a monthly fee for their children in their Grade R year, up to the lack of human and other resources. The government provides only one qualified ECD educator for the Grade R group, no matter the number of children.

Grade R is considered a very important year as it prepares the learners for formal schooling. The principal said that the government promised to give more attention to early childhood development, but they did not keep their promise. He said: *“The school is financially broken as 98% of our parents receive SASSA grants.”* Here, he is referring to the number of parents on unemployment benefits.

Then, since the department allocates posts according to the previous year’s learner statistics, posts are never correctly allocated (through the PPM), according to the current year’s admissions. In the past schools could apply for *“growth posts”*, but no longer. A large number of the learners stayed with grandparents as their parents were working elsewhere, usually in bigger cities. He reasoned: *“We are such a small town, and there are no job opportunities here”*. The principal contemplates that there is a lack of parental involvement and parents’ days are usually poorly attended by grandparents or caretakers. According to him, the school needed more specialised educators to cater for learners with barriers. He concluded: *“Inclusive is a name on paper but cannot be realised without proper staff and the necessary equipment. The DoE needs to revisit the PPM and make sure schools have what they need to render proper education”*. The principal stated that there is a large gap between Grade R and Grade 1 that needs to be revisited. According to him, the department also needs to look at the developmental years before Grade R, as most grandparents and guardians do not stimulate their children at home. *“They think it is the school’s job to teach their children”*. This statement was also confirmed by educators and district officials.

School 3

Respondent 3 started with the following statement:

“The inclusive system is a not so new strategy anymore, but after all these years it seems still a struggle for the DoE to implement. We are a Full-Service school but cannot cater for our learners’ needs because of many reasons, beginning with

infrastructure and ending with a shortage of educators, overcrowded classrooms and no remedial educators or therapists in our school. We try to cater as best we can for our learners with special education needs, but the task is almost impossible with the limited resources at hand”.

He continued: *“Our community has many challenges with most of our parents unemployed”.* According to the principal, the school struggles to get parents to attend parents’ days and meetings, and parents are not involved with the school and their children’s school activities. He also noted: *“Parents feel that it is the school’s responsibility to educate their children and do not recognise the role they play in their children’s achievements”.* The principal believed that the parent as the primary carer of the child should be more responsible and involved in their children’s progress and schooling.

The principal believed that learners with barriers find it extremely difficult to cope with the curriculum in the classroom. The school has two assistants that need to help educators in all grades from Grade 1 to Grade 5 with different activities. The Grade 1 educators, therefore do not have the luxury of a class assistant. The assistants are not qualified educators and cannot aid the educator with learners with barriers to learning.

Specialists from the district visit the school once a month to assess and support learners, but this is not nearly enough to cater to the learners’ needs. The school also unsuccessfully tried to make use of home programmes to assist learners, as explained in the following comment:

“Mostly we cannot send any therapeutic work, like an occupational remedial programme home as most of our parents or grandparents are illiterate, or maybe just not interested, and struggle socio-economically. Our experience shows that parents do not follow a daily support programme with their children and mainly use the excuse that the child was too tired or becomes upset”.

It seemed that home programmes were difficult to maintain due to illiteracy or knowledge or lack of interest. It might also be that parents were working away from home and arrived home late, therefore they might be tired, and grandmothers might not have the physical energy to support LSEN children with home programmes.

According to this respondent as well, the school lacked resources and the resources that were provided by the government were difficult to use in their circumstances, as explained in the following statement:

“We have clicker read and write but no internet access and the clicker programme is not available to all educators, but was supposed to be used by the remedial educator that we don’t have. The mathematics programme is unsuccessful for our learners as the school cannot afford the internet. Also, this is a general programme and not barrier specific”.

It seemed that the government-provided programmes depended on internet availability. The school did not receive adequate internet data from the DoE and cannot afford the appropriate internet with the available budget at the school. The clicker programme can be used if all the learners and educators had desk computers and internet access, but this was not the case in the school. The programme, therefore, was only given to the school to be used by a remedial educator that the school did not have. A further challenge was that the school had wheelchair ramps but no toilet amenities adequate for wheelchairs.

6.3.2 Summary

All principals portrayed scepticism about the inclusive system as it seemed to add additional financial strain on infrastructure, human resources, and access to assistive devices in the schools. The participating schools, including the newly built school, were not built adequately to accommodate learners with different disabilities.

All three principals were concerned about the teacher-learner ratio. They all reported that classes were too big to give the LSEN enough support. It seems that a contributing factor to this educator-learner allocation might be that the DoE allocates posts according to the previous year’s numbers and not the current year’s admissions.

Another contributing factor reflected by principals was the difficulty to obtain any professional medical, psychological, social and therapeutic support services from all government departments, due to understaffed facilities in DoE, DSD and DoH. Therefore, learners were placed on long waiting lists due to the unavailability of enough human or other resources. Because of these factors and the lack of remedial

educators in schools as previously mentioned, the SIAS process was delayed and resulted in learners not being supported, or correctly referred according to their needs. These slow and delayed processes have a ripple effect through all the systems in the education networks. For example, if learners are not correctly screened, identified and diagnosed, schools are not allowed to upload their details onto the national Education Management Information System (EMIS), as learners with barriers to learning. This leads to the DoE not realising the number of learners with barriers in their mainstream schools and they can therefore not procure the necessary funding to support these learners. This result in further effects on the allocation of educator posts in schools, as the learner educator ratio for the learners with barriers will not be considered.

A further meso-systemic challenge for schools was the poor pre-school stimulation at home, including uninformed parents and poor community support in mostly low socio-economic communities. The principals were further concerned about the gap between grade R and grade 1, which was also confirmed by educators later in the study. It seemed that part of the reason for the gap might be due to insufficient early childhood stimulation before entering the reception year. Therefore, the Grade R educator might need to work on a lower level with the learners and subsequently, learners enter formal schooling without being school ready. The Grade 1 curriculum with its structured pacesetters might then be on a level that is not appropriate for many learners.

All these meso- and exo systems challenges added to and enhanced the frustrations and stress levels of principals. All these factors appear to influence most levels of the system; and the feedback through to the macro-system planning processes does not happen adequately either.

6.4 LEARNER INFORMATION

The class educator initially screened, identified, and selected the learners with barriers to learning for inclusion in this study. These learners were identified and selected according to the SIAS policy (DOE, 2014b). The first step in the process was for educators to screen all learners in their classes by using available documentation like the clinic card, school readiness information and all social and medical history

available. The educators also gained information on the learner through classroom observation and their own evaluations of the learners' abilities, related to the norm. Screening observations then allowed the educator to complete the SNA 1 and 2 forms (DOE, 2014b). Thereafter the school refers the learner to the district office for further intervention. This process of screening and identification guided the educators in their screening and identifying LSEN. All available documentation and history of learners were used in the selection of learners to help identify disabilities and or barriers to learning. The district officials assessed the selected learners by using school readiness tests, scholastic assessments as well as psychological and occupational assessments, to confirm the identified learners with barriers.

Although the educators conveyed that there were many learners that they identified with language barriers and socio-economic barriers to learning, these barriers were mentioned but not considered in identifying the learners selected as the focus of this study. In two of the participating schools, more than 50% of learners were reportedly not school ready. The decision was made by the educators not to consider school readiness as the primary marker for identifying the learners with barriers to learning.

The educators identified a total of 59 learners in the three participating schools as learners with barriers to learning. According to parents' history intake, the highest number of possible causes for the identified barriers experienced by learners were reported to be mothers' use of alcohol during pregnancy (to be discussed in a later section).

6.5 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

6.5.1 Educators' views

Educators' views on the inclusive system were reported and analysed in tables 6.1 to 6.4. Table 6.1 gives the reader insight into the classroom setup of all 3 schools, the diversity in classrooms and the support systems available. Table 6.2 shows the emotional well-being of educators a possible influence on the education of learners. Table 6.3 indicates the resource needs and table 6.4 indicates the educators' views on the inclusive system meeting LSEN needs. Participants' responses were colour

coded by their identification codes. The percentage of positive responses (yes %) was indicated next to the question and an analysis of the educators' comments relating to the question were given under the respective tables.

The learners in the classrooms varied from the lowest number of 23 in the model C school to the highest number of learners in the mainstream school of 36. The classroom diversity of the three schools are compared in the table below.

Table 6.1: Classroom Setup

CLASSROOM SETUP			
1. Learners per classroom:	Lowest: 23 to highest: 36		
2. Diversity in the classroom:			
Low socio-economic background:	School 1: 9/47	School 2: 42/71	School 3: 32/60
Learner with SEN: (Language barriers and low needs not considered)	School 1: Class 1= 4 Class 2=3 Total: 7	School 2: Class 1=13 Class 2= 10 Total: 23	School 3 Class 1=16 Class 2= 13 Total: 29
LoLT different from the home language:	School 1 33/47	School 2 49/71	School 3 8/60

All three schools had a high number of learners where the LoLT differed from the home language. This was considered as a low-needs barrier, together with school readiness, and not taken into account for identified LSEN.

In later discussions with educators and from the educators' comments, it seemed that school 1 managed to place their learners with barriers equally in classrooms to balance the workload of the educator and it seemed that the high needs LSEN were placed with the more experienced educator. Learners were tested in this school for school readiness in Grade R, therefore, the prior knowledge about all their learners

was available to school 1’s educators to assist with decisions on class placement. Schools 2 and 3 had an unbalanced number of LSEN learners in their classes because the learners were only tested for school readiness during the first term in Grade 1 (after class placement), since not all learners had attended pre-school.

The low rate of school readiness and poor socio-economic circumstances placed an extra responsibility and burden on the educator, as mentioned in the teacher’s comments by K1S: *“The socio-economic background plays a role, and many of our learners are not school ready and our classes are too big”*. Together with unrealistic pacesetters for rural areas, teaching was compromised in the overcrowded classrooms as illustrated in the following statement: *“Two-thirds of learners in your class group are not fully ready for school with pacesetters that is impossible to follow with our group of learners”*.

3. How many learners with learning difficulties do you find in your class?

School 1	School 2	School 3
11/47	32/71	36/60

In further discussion, it became clear that the question was not clear to educators, as they were confused between the identified candidates and learning difficulties in general. They thus interpreted the question differently. School 1 chose the 7 identified moderate to high needs learners and 4 low needs learners in the grade (n=11). School 2 chose the moderate and high needs learners and they were unsure of whether some of these learners fell into low or moderate needs group. School 3 chose the group of learners that were not fully school ready.

However, after clarification the following emerged:

Educators felt capable to teach and adapt the curriculum for low needs learners in their classes. *“Mostly concentration and the fine motor that will fall under low needs were not considered as we know how to remedy that”*. It also seemed that the low school readiness rate of learners was not a major concern for them, but rather the number of learners in the class and the pacesetters as illustrated in *“Visual perceptual skills also usually pick up through the year for most learners. I wish we could just stand still a little bit longer with basic skills”*. Educators confirmed that the strict pacesetters

hampered the progress of grade 1 learners, due to the fact that many of these learners were not school-ready at school entry.

4. How many of the identified learners were diagnosed by a professional as they entered school?

School 1	School 2	School3
1	0	0

Only one learner in all three of the participating schools was previously professionally diagnosed. This is likely to be because of the low availability or absence of professional services in the Sarah Baartman district, in an under-resourced province. There seems to be a great shortage of professional medical and para-medical staff in all government sections. The DoE only had one psychologist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, physiotherapist and audiologist for the entire district that served 213 schools and more than 200 000 learners, in an area that covers 58 194 square kilometres. However, it may have been that some learners were diagnosed by the clinic or hospital, but parents either lost the report or did not give the report to the school, because they might fear discrimination. As most clinic cards were not available at the schools, it was difficult to determine such cases. The available clinic cards did not state any diagnoses or concerns.

5. Do you have facilities available at your school to confirm barriers to learning?

0%

There was a 100% *no* response from all the schools. All educators confirmed that learners need to be assessed outside.

6. Is there enough professional support available to assist you?

School 1	School 2	School 3
0%	0%	0%

All three schools responded that there was not sufficient professional support available to assist the schools and learners. *“Although the professional support staff assess our learners, it is not nearly adequate to cover for all our needs”*. From my observations and educators’ comments, it seemed that all available facilities were understaffed or did not have the needed professional facilities. There was one hospital

in the area that served the three schools. School 3 was 50km and school 2 was 25km away from the hospital. The clinics that were nearby schools had no professional psychologists or therapists as Allied Health Professionals, although the hospital had some support staff, namely one Occupational Therapist, one Speech Therapist and one Physiotherapist. These are totally insufficient to cater to the community's needs, as the area had 43 schools with approximately 22 000 learners. It appeared then from my observation that because of this, departments cross-referred learners between DoE, DoH and DSD in the hope that space would open up to assess the learners.

6 Do you have any classroom assistants?

There was a 100% no response. The two mainstream schools did not have any educator- assistants in school. *"In our Full-Service school, there are two assistants for the whole school"*. The Full-Service school had two assistants for the entire school. Therefore, the assistants were not available to support the grade one learners in the classrooms, and according to the educators they were not trained in education and could merely help with administrative tasks in school.

7 Do you have any assistive devices in your classroom?

All the schools responded with a 100% no response. The Full-Service school confirmed that they had received clicker read and write, but the learners and educators had no desktop computers in their classrooms Therefore the system was not accessible to them. It also seemed that a previous remedial educator was trained on the programme, but she left the DoE, explaining the following comment. *"We only have clicker but no remedial educator to use it"*. It seemed although the DoE launched initiatives and programmes that schools were not equipped with the necessary facilities to access and use many of these resources.

8 If so, are these devices barrier specific?

All the schools confirmed that they have no barrier-specific devices to teach their learners according to their needs. Schools confirmed that a year before they had to prepare lists for the provincial office of needed devices for their LSEN learners that were learner-specific, but had not received any devices to date. This might be that the red-tape of government institutions is so cumbersome that many learners fall through

the cracks, or that the financial constraints mean the DoE cannot meet the requirements of schools. However, the ECDoE return unused money every year.

Table 6.2: Educator Wellbeing

FOUNDATION PHASE: Gr 1 Class educators' responses

Participants' identification code	Educator 1 P1E	Educator 2 P2M	Educator 3 K1S	Educator 4 K2H	Educator 5 A1C	Educator 6 A2V
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	Yes Response
Do you feel that you can cope with the demands expected from you?	16%
Are you content with your situation in the classroom?	16%
Would you choose another career if given a choice?	33%

A very low yes response on coping in the school environment and inclusive classroom might be influential in terms of the scholastic and emotional wellbeing of learners. All the younger educators responded that they would prefer to be in a career less stressful, although they indicated that teaching was their first career choice. The following comments indicated the strain and stress levels of educators. "...work affecting wellbeing and I am not sure if I can take this abuse for the rest of my life". "I would like to be in a career that can fix the system". The older educators' stress levels were just as high, but they did not indicate any career changes as an option. It might be that they realise that they are approaching the end of their careers, and a career change might affect their pensions. Perhaps if they were at a different stage of their careers, it would have been a consideration, as indicated by the following remark: "I'm going on pension next year. I used to love my job, but not anymore".

Although all educators felt that their work affects their wellbeing, one educator reported having gone for therapy and is currently on medication for stress and anxiety. The main reasons for educators experiencing these concerning high levels of stress seemed were reported as follows:

- Being inexperienced educators, with no support or guidance;

- An *unreasonable* amount of administration for the department on top of *normal* marking and class administration;
- High numbers of learners with barriers to learning per classroom;
- The high number of learners that are not school ready;
- Feelings of guilt because of the high number of learners in a class makes it impossible to afford individual attention;
- Not enough support from the district or head office;
- The extensive amount of work needed to be covered by learners(pacesetters) where many were not school ready;
- Learners with low to high needs cannot receive individual attention because of the pace that the educator needs to sustain, to get through the expected pacesetters by the department. Therefore, they cannot stay on a concept until all learners in class have mastered it. *“It is stressful to realise that half of your learners have not mastered the work, but you need to carry on to the next concept; otherwise, you are going to be questioned by the department and labelled as a poor educator who cannot get through the work”*.
- LOLT is different from the home language;
- Learners, not school ready: emotionally, physically, and academically.

The high-stress levels of educators was concerning as it might have a direct impact on learner progress.

Table 6.3: Resource Needs

FOUNDATION PHASE: Gr 1 Class educators’ responses

Participants’ identification code	Educator 1	Educator 2	Educator 3	Educator 4	Educator 5	Educator 6
	P1E	P2M	K1S	K2H	A1C	A2V

RESOURCES/ NEEDS ANALYSIS Yes Response

1 Does the school have enough human resources to cater to the needs of the learners with barriers to learning?

16%

Only an educator from the school with governing body educators responded yes, but made it clear that the human resources can only accommodate certain learners with low needs: *“Yes, we have governing body educators so I feel we can cater for low needs learners, but not moderate to high needs”*. *“This support ... the principal noted that governing body educators are educators employed out of the schools’ budget”*. The money derived from parents paying school fees, therefore the classes are smaller compared to schools that cannot afford further educators.

2 Do you know what resources/equipment is needed to cater for barrier specific adaptation in your class? 16%

An educator from School 1 responded yes, but made it clear that it is only for *“Only low needs”*. The educator explained that they make or buy their own assistive devices for low needs learners.

2 If you answered yes to the question above, do you have these resources in your classroom

The same school responded that they make all their resources themselves or ask parents to buy what is needed: *“Although I answered yes, we urgently need a remedial assistant for our two gr 1 classes. The rest of the resources for low needs we can make or ask the parent to buy”*. The other two schools did not have the finances to buy materials to make resources.

Table 6.4: IE Meeting LSEN Needs

FOUNDATION PHASE: Gr 1 Class educators’ responses

Identification	Educator 1	Educator 2	Educator 3	Educator 4	Educator 5	Educator 6
code	P1E	P2M	K1S	K2H	A1C	A2V

INCLUSIVE SYSTEM MEETING LSEN NEEDS

1 Do you think the top structure, Provincial and National, understand the needs of LSEN in a classroom?

All educators responded no to this question. This response indicated that educators experienced the policy and decision-makers being out of touch with what is happening on the ground level. *“No, they have their ideas and theories but do not know how it is*

in reality”; *“Nothing provided what they are trying to promote”*. In further discussions of the last statement, it became clear that the network of systems that are needed for IE to work are not only located in the education section, but circles further out to DSD and DOH as these educators explained: *“We don’t even have a diagnosis to start off with, you realise their problems, complete forms but wait forever and nothing changes for the learner. Everywhere is waiting lists at the hospital and social development and the district”*. Educators realised that the DoE cannot provide all the services required.

Educators indicated that although they tried to seek help for the learners and families in other government departments, it is frustrating as waiting lists were long due to lack of resources as explained here: *“Most of the time social development do not have cars.”* Participant P1E explained further that communication between the parent, community clinic and the schools were poor: *“Yes, if the parents take the child to the clinic there’s no feedback but education expect us to do SIAS”*. It seems although the school asks for a report from the clinic, the parents explained that they did not get one, therefore it was difficult for schools to complete the SIAS process. The fact that they do not have remedial educators in the schools or even an extra educator according to the number of learners with barriers in the school frustrated them and they believed the whole SIAS process was wasting their valuable time. *“It’s not helping us, we don’t even get an extra educator as was promised”*. The SIAS process took too long due to the lack or shortage of sufficient support services and structures. Also, when the process of screening and identification was completed the schools were unable to support these learners, due to systemic barriers in all government departments.

2 How have learners been affected by the IE model?

Educators believed that LSEN are negatively affected by the inclusive system mainly due to big classes, curriculum challenges and the shortage of human as well as other resources as confirmed by the following comments: *“School needs to have fewer learners in class to enable the educator to give more individual support. Schools urgently need professional support staff like psychologists, occupational therapists and speech therapists and remedial educators”*. Educators believed that the curriculum does not make provision for learners that were not school ready or LSEN, as indicated in the following comments. *“Learners needing special attention are not being catered for and are falling behind”*; *“They(LSEN), and other learners struggle to*

keep up with the workload which is expected to be covered in the curriculum”.

Therefore, the number of learners in class combined with the fact that many learners were not school ready; and a curriculum not suited to the rural settings lead to LSEN learners not benefitting from the system. Educators were also afraid to group or stream learners for fear of discrimination. These combining factors, together with no trained class assistants or professional support staff in schools hampered the progress of LSEN.

- 3 Do you feel that learners have experienced adequate physical, cognitive, and emotional growth during the year, according to their abilities and the norm of the peer group?

Only the educators from the fee-paying school responded positively, in contrast with the non-fee-paying schools that responded negatively. One educator noted: *“Some of them have grown a bit but I am still not satisfied with the outcome”.* The positive response might be that remedial services were available to the fee-paying school, and not to the other participating schools. Some parents could also pay for private therapy in school 1. Another factor influencing better progress may be some LSEN in the same class being allowed to work as a small group at their own pace.

4. What, if any, would you like to change to be able to educate all learners to reach their optimal potentials?

There appears to be a need for support staff in schools and training: *“We need support staff in school and community to help learners to reach their optimal potential”*; *“We do not have the knowledge or human resources to assist”*; *“I need to gain experience, have someone help me in my class ...”*. Although some educators were trained in the system, all felt that they lack the knowledge to teach LSEN. *“The school needs remedial classes and educators as we are not trained to help these learners”*. This belief was also reflected in their confidence in identifying learners and leads to stress that was recognisable during this study.

6.5.2 Summary

The findings illustrated that in the micro systems, where educators influence the LSEN through the processes of teaching, they felt that they were not sufficiently trained or qualified to teach LSEN learners in mainstream schools. Their experience in education gave the older educators confidence in helping low needs children with different needs, but did not equip them, nor gave them the skill set to teach learners with moderate to high needs like autism, the hard of hearing, those with more severe mental challenges or visual impairment. Although one educator had received formal training in educating special needs learners, it seemed that their training was more generic, and the programmes are not designed for intensive training on barrier specific education for moderate to high needs learners. The younger inexperienced educators, although supposedly trained in the inclusive system, noted that they lacked the confidence and skills to meet the needs of LSEN in mainstream schools.

Moving to the broader exo-system, the few special schools in the Eastern Cape also did not have the capacity to cater for the placement demands of LSEN. They were mostly sited in the bigger cities, thus the financial restrictions of parents mostly from the rural areas further contributed to high needs learners remaining in mainstream schools; since it is too expensive to send their children far away from home. Therefore, high needs learners remained in under-resourced mainstream schools with insufficient infrastructure, financial constraints, and overcrowded classrooms.

When looking at the macro-system, the current curriculum, with what appeared to be unsuitable pacesetters for rural schools and LSEN seemed to be a challenge to adequate teaching. Educators reflected that they needed to move on before learners mastered the basic concepts of reading, writing and mathematics.

To conclude, the nature of the educators' work and the expectations of policymakers affected educators' wellbeing, as they reported elevated stress levels. These stress levels appeared to negatively influence their relationships with their LSEN, which ended up in feelings of guilt as educators were unable to give the needed emotional and curricular support to these learners. It seemed that feelings of being let down by broader support systems, including DoH and DSD, left educators with feelings of

despair and hopelessness, negatively impacting on their energy levels. The high stress levels of the educators might also contribute to LSEN learners' reticence in class, which in turn might impact on their social development and consequent behaviour.

6.6 EDUCATORS' REPORTS ON THE SELECTED LEARNERS' PROGRESS

Table 6.5 comprises the educators' responses on the physical, emotional and social development of identified LSEN, compared to their peer group. A percentage of yes responses for each school (S1, S2 and S3) was shown. Below each group of questions, the relevant educator comments were given and analysed.

Table 6.5: Learner Development

FOUNDATION PHASE: GR 1			
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	% yes responses		
1. Does the learner have any visible physical challenges?	S1 14%	S2 13%	S3 24%
2. Is the learner small compared to the group?	S1 14%	S2 17%	S3 12%
3. Are there any facial features that concern you?	S1 14%	S2 22%	S3 8%
4. Are you aware of any medical diagnosis of a syndrome?	S1 14%	S2 0%	S3 8%
5. Does the learner look healthy and well cared for?	S1 100%	S2 52%	S3 80%

Only one learner in the group had a medical diagnosis. It appeared that educators did not feel confident to identify barriers. *“Difficult to say, one learner seems small for his age. It might be that they were afraid of labelling the child or it could be that they felt they lack the knowledge. It looks like FAS, I don’t know.”* Reports from the educators and my own experience, gave indications that all three factors played a role in identifying learners. It seemed that the highest number of identified learners had features of undiagnosed FASD, but not all necessary defining characteristics.

EMOTIONAL APPEARANCE	% yes responses		
	S1	S2	S3
1 Does the learner seems happy?	28%	65%	80%
2 Does the learner seem to have self-confidence?	14%	39%	80%
3 Does the learner cry often?	42%	17%	12%
4 Are there any emotional outbursts?	58%	22%	56%
5 Do you think the learner has enough self-confidence to explore the environment?	42.8%	35%	20%
6 Is there evidence of wetting or soiling of underwear?	0%	4%	4%
7 Does the learner seem on the same emotional level as the peer group?	0%	48%	20%
8 Are there signs of anxiety compared to the rest of the group?	71%	22%	24%

The lowest percentage of reported happiness was in the fee-paying school. *“Mom complains of the learner not wanting to come to school”*. Almost all learners in the school 1 group were school-ready, except for the identified learners with barriers, therefore the challenges that the LSEN experienced might have been more obvious than in the other two schools, where a large group of learners were not school ready. The LSEN might experience more pressure from the school, educator, and parents to perform as expectations in the fee-paying school might seem higher for these learners.

School 3 reported sufficient self-confidence but also higher incidence of emotional outbursts, which might suggest that the learners were not necessarily confident or

happy. It is also supported by the “*low self-confidence to explore*” reported by an educator. It might be that the Full-Service school had wider tolerance of learner performances, as more learners in the class were not school-ready, therefore it might be that the challenges LSEN experienced were not so obvious in class.

School 2 reported almost half of their LSEN learners on the same emotional level as the group. School 2 had a very low rate of school readiness and it might be that the difference between the low and moderate needs learners was not noteworthy.

However, all schools reported later in the questionnaires that their LSEN learners tend to play with younger learners or those experiencing the same challenges.

When looking into the emotional wellbeing the observations of the different schools correlate in terms of unhappiness, crying and in comparison, to the rest of the group. The following comments and words by educators were often used: *emotional concerns, don't know if being bullied, quiet, passive, functions on a four-year level, cries, plays with pencil-does not work, own world, go to the toilet often, busy, quarrelsome, sometimes cries, always worried she is doing something wrong, low self-confidence, dreams, distant*. These comments by the educators were indicators of emotional stress and anxiety by the LSEN learners.

SOCIAL	% Yes responses		
	S1	S2	S3
1. Does the learner have friends?	71%	86%	88%
2. Are the friends in the same age group?	43%	65%	40%
3. Are the friends in a younger age group?	57%	30%	40%
4. Does the learner seem withdrawn from the group?	57%	43%	12%
5. Are there any social behaviour concerns?	42%	39%	24%
6. Is the learner being bullied?	0%	79%	4%
7. Does the learner fit in with his/her peer group?	71%	28%	12%
8. Do you think that the learner experiences the classroom as a safe space?	85%	65%	56%
9. Does the class group accept this learner?	97%	85%	88%
10. Is the learner able to share?	71%	29%	28%
11. Can the learner await his/her turn?	29%	15%	28%

Educators concurred that most LSEN learners make friends, but find it difficult to maintain their friendships, as the following comment indicated: “*They make friends but struggle to keep them*”. Although the educators indicated that the peer group accepted, tolerate and do not tease the LSEN, it seemed that they were not likely to befriend and stay friends with them. It seems that LSEN chose friends experiencing the same challenges, as this comment indicates: “*Plays with a friend like them*”. This might be that some learners in the group, although at the same chronological age were not on the same developmental level: some LSEN reportedly prefer to play with younger children as K1S indicated: “*They play with younger children*”. Since most of the LSEN group in this study experienced cognitive challenges and experienced some challenges with certain acceptable social skills (like waiting their turn or sharing), these might also contribute to social challenges.

SCHOLASTIC	%of yes response		
	S1	S2	S3
1. Does the learner know his/her address?	15%	9%	8%
2. Does the learner know the parents' telephone number?	15%	9%	8%
3. Does the learner know his/her date of birth?	0%	9%	8%
4. Can the learner tie his/her shoelaces?	15%	9%	56%
5. Can he/she draw basic shapes?	71%	48%	56%
6. Is the learner able to dress him/herself?	100%	91%	85%
7. Is the learner able to cross the midline?	29%	35%	40%
8. Does the learner participate in scholastic activities?	85%	35%	56%
9. Can he/she read and write at the expected level?	0%	0%	0%
10. Up to which point can the learner count?	<i>Differs from 20 to 100</i>		
11. Is the learner progressing according to what you expect at this stage?	0%	0%	0%
12. Was the learner school ready according to his/her assessment?	0%	0%	0%

Most of the learners could dress themselves. School 1 indicated 100% but the educator mentioned “**Yes, but some partially**”. Most of the LSEN learners did not know their parents' addresses or telephone numbers, or their dates of birth. Usually, these are taught at the pre-school level and it was unclear whether they could not master the information or had not been taught. Most of these learners were fetched by family or walked home with friends after school.

The peer group level and emotional levels reported by school 2 correlated with their high number of learners not being ready for school and the higher number of learners experiencing barriers to learning. But these facts highlight the previously mentioned concerns about classroom sizes and pacesetters in foundation phase classes. None of the LSEN learners were found to be school-ready, although the tests were completed in March/April during their Grade 1 year. It seemed that the educators believed that the learners with barriers did not show the same progress as their peers who were also not initially school ready. Some learners could not read by the end of the year, and others were still not on the expected level.

BEHAVIOUR	% yes response		
	S1	S2	S3
1. Does the learner adhere to discipline?	42%	35%	68%
2. Does the learner follow basic rules?	71%	35%	68%
3. Is his/her behaviour age-appropriate?	41%	29%	12%
4. Does he/she bully other learners?	14%	14%	12%

Although most learners did not behave age-appropriately, they tried to follow basic rules. The learners sometimes experienced emotional outbursts, but the educators seemed to accept these. However, there were some concerns about inappropriate behaviour. Only a few learners were reported as difficult, and a small percentage bullied other children. Educators reported that the LSEN learners were not bullied in class but were unable to report on what happened outside the classroom.

Between 14 and 24% of learners were reported with physical, including facial concerns, although it appeared that hygienic neglect due to poor socio-economic circumstances were also included in physical concerns. Educators also seemed uncertain what to look for or perhaps could not recognise some of the facial features associated with developmental delays as few mentioned it. Almost 50% of participating learners' parents or carers reported the mothers having consumed alcohol during pregnancy. Since not all FASD is evident, it was difficult to confirm whether educators could recognise FASD in facial features, or whether in most learners potentially at risk there were no distinctive facial features. During the discussions, four educators confirmed that they were a bit uncertain and *"do not feel qualified as it seems like a diagnosis"*. It was not a concern for the educators if the learner was only a little bit smaller and immature compared to the rest. Educators also mentioned that *"except maybe for Down syndrome"*, they were likely to find it difficult to recognise any syndromes.

Except for School 1, educators believed that most participating learners seemed happy, but up to 80% also reportedly showed low self-esteem and were said to be not on the same emotional level as their peers. This seemed contradictory to the happy response. However during educator discussions, it was clear that educators believed that learners get anxious when confronted with scholastic tasks, but it has no relation to their general happiness. Educators at school 1 reported that their LSEN did not seem to be always aware or relate well to the group, therefore they believed that the learners might not be happy in general. They also appear easily upset and more anxious and unsure than the rest of the learners. Although educators were aware of bedwetting and only one learner was mentioned after an accident in class, four parents reported bedwetting during the parent intake history which might also be a sign of emotional distress.

Educators reported that most participating learners had friends, some in a younger age group and others chose friends which also experienced barriers. It might be that the choices of friends are according to their developmental stage rather than age. It appeared that although the peer group accepted the learners with barriers and no noteworthy bullying was reported, they did not fully relate to the LSEN group. It might be because of the social developmental stage of foundation phase learners where

they distinguish differences between one another and are also aware of their own talents and compare talents and choose their social group.

Educators' experiences in the classroom were that the LSEN group might find it more difficult to fit in with their peer group and their behaviour was not always age-appropriate. None of the selected group was reportedly school ready and all were rated as scholastically behind their peers. Although educators understood that participating learners had some developmental delays, they reported concerns about their behaviour. Problematic behaviour mainly presents as not acting appropriately, according to expectations of the grade. Inappropriate behaviour led to concerns about potentially disturbing the other learners and this then made it difficult for the educator to follow her programme.

Through the views of the participants, the progress of the LSEN in their first year of formal schooling was monitored to determine whether they benefited or not from IE. Interviews with stakeholders revealed valuable data. Learner progress and development were also confirmed by the learner profiler and other relevant documentation. Focus group discussions with ESSS district officials, parents and educators provided me clear information on the inclusive system, classroom practices and the LSEN in the mainstream system. Although not part of the investigation it also assisted in understanding the inseparable role of other related departments, like DoH, DSD, as well as the wider community played in the successes or failures of the LSEN within an inclusive system. A follow up at the end of the year confirmed the initial findings of educators and educators believed that they could not provide the best education for these learners.

CHAPTER 7: FOCUS GROUPS, OBSERVATIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND FIELDNOTES

Template analysis was used to balance and structure the analytic process (King, 2012). I structured the findings according to themes and sub-themes. Focus group, classroom observations, educator discussions, field notes and free-response items were incorporated into this data analysis, to expand on the findings reported in chapter 6. The first step was to identify the perceptions and experiences of participants that were relevant to the research and to group them. Thereafter, hierarchical coding was done, where similar codes were grouped to form subthemes. Verbatim quotations, without changing participants' usage of language, support the findings. Participants could use their language of choice, either Afrikaans or English. Afrikaans quotations were translated into English, which is in brackets for the reader.

I chose to use my three research questions as the focus of the main themes. I analysed the transcripts by dividing up the data. Thereafter I colour-coded responses belonging to the corresponding main themes. All the educators expressed some information repeatedly. Therefore the next step was to form sub-themes by colour-coding this response data into categories, to form my sub-themes.

A. Theme 1: The impact of the inclusive system on the development and psychological wellbeing of the grade one learners with barriers to learning, in mainstream education.

7.1 EDUCATORS' RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTION 1

7.1.1 School readiness

Educators stated that 5-year-old learners should not be allowed to enter grade one unless they have tested as being ready for school. According to all participants, too many learners started school without being ready for formal schooling. This occurred because formal schooling was free, whereas there were costs attached to earlier levels. The opinion was that 5-year-old children were "*still too babylike and belonged*

in Grade R". The general feeling of participants was when a child is aged 6 and turning 7, they are more ready for formal schooling. K2H stated: "... *put together our language barriers with all the other variables with learners far too young, social-economical, and learners with different barriers in our big classes - it makes it very difficult to teach*". This statement confirmed the diversity of challenges that are part of daily schooling in a classroom that can be considered the norm in most rural schools.

Educators also noted that many parents send their children to school because it is "*too much of an effort*" (A2V) for them to keep the learner for another year at home. The educators believed that the range of learners and the developmental stages of these learners in their classrooms varied substantially and these circumstances made it very difficult to teach and reach the required outcomes for all learners.

7.1.2: Educators' views on the Development of LSEN in mainstream

Developmental stage: The educators believed that the group of LSEN was mostly not on the same level as their peer group. Most educators described these learners as playful with short concentration spans. This was also supported by parents' observations as described later in the study. Socially, as also confirmed in the questionnaires, most of the LSEN played with younger children or with each other, but not so much with the rest of their peer group. The group mostly accepted them and in general, the educators felt that in the classroom there was no bullying; but they could not confirm whether they experienced bullying outside the school.

Physical: The educators believed that the nutrition scheme of the province benefited the learners in both School 2 and School 3. All the learners at least had one meal at the school. The learners at School 1, a quintile 5 fee-paying school, did not qualify for inclusion in the nutrition programme.

In terms of physical exercise, the Life Orientation syllabus specifies 5% of the programme for physical activities. Although most children were active, the educators mentioned that they would prefer a programme for the Grade 1 learners where they could benefit from structured physical activity every day, since most of the LSEN's gross-motor skills were not developed according to the norm. Some of the LSEN could

not compete physically with their peers and this contributed to the feeling of being “*left out*”. This also impacted their self-confidence and the ability to fit in with their peers.

Social-emotional: The educators reported that in general, the LSEN learners were very quiet and only speak when spoken to, or otherwise some could be very disruptive in class. The LSEN group were more likely to cry in class compared to their peers and needed more attention. All educators agreed that they are unable to give these learners the time they needed. Terms used to describe these learners were: *very needy, sweet, baby-like, not on the level of peer group*, and educators felt that these learners would thrive in a small group where the educator can afford the time to give emotional and scholastic support, on the level that is required. Although the other learners accepted them in class, the LSEN learners themselves realised that they were not able to do the work that is required. P2M remarked: “*This must have an impact on their confidence and their self-esteem, I don’t know. How would you feel in an environment where you can’t cope? Because the other children also know*”. The implications of this remark have reference to the human rights question of acting in the best interest of the child for learners in mainstream schools and their human dignity; to be discussed later in this chapter.

Scholastic: Most LSEN were behind the peer group and could not cope with the pacesetters and the demands of formal schooling. Educators believed that curriculum officials demanding the strict following of pacesetters prevented them from assisting the LSEN to acquire the basic skills: not only necessary for achievement in gr 1 but throughout their schooling. The inability to keep up with the scholastic demands seemed to influence their emotional and social wellbeing; and that in turn had an impact on their later behaviour as confirmed in the questionnaires, district officials’ and parents’ comments.

7.1.3: Developmental educational needs of LSEN in the inclusive system to reach their full potential

Educators believed that the inclusive system did not efficiently cater to learners with special educational needs due to the following reasons:

- Not enough human resources in school to accommodate individual needs;
- Not enough support from the district office;
- No educator assistants in the gr 1 classroom in the FSS or mainstream schools;
- No remedial educator or specialised support services. A2V remarked “...soos jy weet sit ons met 70% kinders met sosio ekonomiese probleme en een sielkundige en een OT in die distrik”. (As you know 70% of our children have socio-economic problems, with one Psychologist and one Occupational Therapist in the district.);
- No curriculum or training to assist with ISP- A1C: “LSEN kan nie op mainstream curriculum geassesseer word nie, maar ons het niks anders nie.” (LSEN cannot be assessed on the mainstream curriculum, but we have nothing else);
- Educators believed that there are no clear guidelines, structures, or training provided by the DoE. None of the participating educators were aware of the 3-streams model and the implementation thereof.

A2V: “Ons het al ses curriculums gehad eers OBE, toe adapted OBE, NSC, RNCS en nou CAPS. Nie een van daai curriculums het verduidelik hoe akkomodeer dit LSEN nie. Hulle moet saam met die ander kinders se standaard geassesseer word.” (We already had 6 curriculums, OBE.....and now CAPS. None of those curriculums explained how to accommodate LSEN within the curriculum. They have to be assessed on the same standard as the other learners).

The educators believed that the curriculum does not cater for learners with barriers to learning and although EWP6 (DoE, 2001a) mentioned provisions for these learners, there are no clear instructions or curriculum for learners on ISP (Individual Support Programme). The computerised SA-SAMS also does not make provision on the promotion schedule for such learners. In addition, K2H remarked: “We also get no assistance from the district as it seems that they also don’t know what to do with these learners in the mainstream curriculum. They advise us to fail them and then progress them if they are too old or repeated twice in a phase”. A2V continued: “I just feel if they don’t want to give us a curriculum for LSEN learners in mainstream schools then they at least must enable us to assess these learners on their level of performance and not on mainstream standards”. The general feeling was that the learners were in the

mainstream schools because the government requires it, but without any provision to accommodate them.

Although educators expressed willingness to help learners with barriers to reach their full potential, they felt that the system failed them. Educator participant **A1C**: mentioned that through years of experience she felt that she could help LSEN but because of time constraints and the amount of administrative work currently makes it impossible. *“Ons jaag so om deur die program te kom om al die CAPS te doen tesame met al die admin.” (We rush to get through the programme with all the CAPS together with all the administration).*

It seemed that the large number and the variety of learners in the classroom complicated teaching in the Grade 1 class, as basic skills needed to be taught and there was not enough time to linger on concepts with slower learners, as educators were compelled to keep up with the timeframes of the pacesetters. Educators believed LSEN learners would only be able to reach their full potential in a classroom with less than twenty learners in a class and only with a full-time class assistant that understands teaching methodology. One educator (**P1E**) mentioned that Finland had an assistant next to each LSEN learner, which resulted in a much higher pass rate for these learners.

Reasons given by educators for not being able to cater to learners' needs as intended in EWP 6 (DoE, 2001b), were:

- Language barriers;
- Overcrowded classrooms;
- To many LSEN in a classroom;
- To many Grade 1 learners that are not school ready;
- A Curriculum that does not cater to learners' needs with strict pacesetters that do not leave room for repeating concepts;
- Pacesetters might cater to a higher middle-class fee-paying school where all learners were school ready.

7.1.4 The impact of language barriers

The importance of home language education especially in the foundation phase as a means of language and scholastic achievement (Myburgh et al., 2004; Thomas and Collier, 2001). The DBE (2010d) confirms the value of offering the home language as the preferred LoLT for especially early schooling but also recognises the parents' preferences for English as the LoLT. Reasons for this vary from English as a global language and its associations with economic progress, since it is commonly used in the working environment, as well as being the language offered by most universities (DBE, 2010d).

One of the main concerns in the grade 1 classroom was language barriers, as many learners spoke only isiXhosa at home and had to attend school where there was a different LoLT. It also appeared that some of their carers could not help them as they were also not fluent in English or Afrikaans. The curriculum and pacesetters did not take language barriers into account.

7.2 DISTRICT OFFICIALS

7.2.1. Views on educators' abilities and level of training

ESSS district participants believed that most LSEN learners' developmental milestones are usually behind their peers and officials believed that challenges in teaching can already be seen in grade 1:

“Usually what we see when assessing the learners, they are behind their peers, and a big concern is the number of little ones with undiagnosed FAS. You only get the information from the guardian or mother from parent intake consultation. This is a big issue as you will find that their developmental milestones are behind, Therefore the Grade R and one educator should be well trained to stimulate these learners”. (S1)

Participants believed that Grade R educators are not always qualified to teach at Grade R level, as educators trained for higher education were sometimes employed. They also suggested that the PGCE training is not sufficient to teach Grade R, as specialised training is required in preparing learners for formal schooling.

District participants believed that current Foundation Phase training is not extensive enough to provide quality education for learners with barriers to learning. This belief is also supported by the comments of educators themselves as previously discussed. S2 explained: *“Educators are not trained for barriers as they lack methods in specialised teaching”*. They also suggested that the older generation educators are better equipped to deal with learners with barriers than the younger ones and mentioned that they have patience with LSEN learners. S3 stated: *“You find a big difference between young ones and those ones that trained before. The older ones have more patience and methods to deal with barriers”*. District participants suggested that it might be that the older ones learned through experience but also suggested that their Education College training might be more intensive than recent inclusive training. This comment was also confirmed in educator discussions. PS2 stated: *“Yes, some educators have a degree and only do that one-year conversion and that is not enough to give you that practical experience. It is not like back in the day where they did a four-year degree or diploma, and it was all based around teaching”*. District participants mentioned that their experiences in visiting schools are that the Grade 1 educators that were trained in the previous Education Colleges seemed more confident than the younger generation of educators trained at universities.

Participants questioned the educators’ levels of training to help LSEN according to their needs. District participants also believed that even if educators were trained in the inclusive system, there are too many systemic barriers to offer quality education to LSEN. Participant PS1 noted the following:

“Educators do not necessarily understand the developmental delays of learners with obstacles and that is the starting point to be able to help these learners. Grade 1 educators are not qualified remedial educators or occupational therapists, though we expect them to cover these specialised fields when planning an ISP”.

This observation correlates with the comments by educators that their training was very theoretical and not practical enough, to assist learners with barriers to learning.

Participants stated that it is vital to have correctly trained Grade R educators to prepare learners for Grade 1. PS1 said that:

“When visiting Grade R, you realise that the educator is actually doing grade 1 work and a crucial part of their developmental skills that are necessary for later success is

not being taught. Grade R must ensure that gross and fine motor skills are on par with the learner's age and must concentrate on visual perception etc. to prepare the child."

PS2 continued: *"Yes, the CAPS curriculum is also not appropriate for our learners"*.

It seemed that district officials believed that the grade R curriculum was not appropriate for learners and the teachers had not been sufficiently trained.

7.2.2: District officials' training to support the gr 1 educators and LSEN learners

Although district participants were trained in their different specialised fields, none of them was trained in assisting the educator in planning an ISP. All officials understood their specialisation field well. PS1 noted that they were competent: *"...identifying learners with barriers - but my downfall in education is that I don't know anything about curriculum. I can change environmental factors but don't have the teaching background to simplify it"*. The belief was that it is not possible to be an expert in all areas of disabilities. S4 explained: *"There is not an all-rounder disability course presented at university, ...and I don't even know if it is possible"*. Officials mentioned that they taught themselves through *reading up* and by using their experience gained over the years in education. S1 noted: *"... we got a little bit of exposure on how to identify barriers..."*. S2 continued: *"Most of our learners don't work the grade level, so we will look at the pacesetters"*. ESSS participants felt that curriculum officials did not cater for learners with barriers in the mainstream system although EWP6 (DoE, 2001b), makes provision for LSEN. S2 stated:

"In theory but practically it doesn't work because the curriculum just wants to push on according to pacesetters. You can't say we slow down and make sure all learners understand the concept, because then the educator will not be able to cover all pacesetters". S4 also noted: *"Yes, and curriculum officials do not understand Caps also make provision for LSEN, so we don't speak the same language in the district office"*. Participants believed that this is confusing for educators and not in LSEN's best interest because educators are confused and tend to adhere to the curriculum's instructions.

According to participants, the adapted three streams curriculum for technical and occupational vocational skills was recently made available, but ESSS or curriculum officials had not been trained on the new curriculum. PS2 said: *"This curriculum*

speaks to senior learners, but we haven't even sorted our foundation phase support out now they want to start with three-streams, ...no man". There was a general feeling that the system and the directorate failed them. One official mentioned that he understood differentiation in the classroom, but it is challenging for educators to differentiate with the number of learners in class and the different barriers that they need to consider. S3 stated that: *"When an educator needs to deal with various disabilities like hard of hearing, ADHD, cognitive and visual impairment all in one class, it is not possible to provide for each and all the quality education they deserve".* District officials were trained to support educators but could not support educators efficiently.

To summarise, district participants believed that they could not provide quality support to schools due to the following obstacles:

- A small group of officials that need to cater to a vast poverty-stricken district;
- Not enough specialised support staff;
- Lack of resources, infrastructure or support from provincial offices and government;
- Shortage of Special Schools or Skills Centres;
- Shortages of finances;
- Crisis management all the time due to the dire needs in the district;
- Too many programmes;
- Demands of the region are higher than it is humanly possible to give with available human and other resources.

7.2.3: Dealing with disabilities in a Grade 1 class

District participants believed that it is almost impossible for one person to deal with different disabilities in a Grade 1 class as it requires multiple teaching strategies and methods to cater for each disability category. PS1 explained: *"...and if you don't have an assistant, it is impossible. PS2 said: It also depends on how many learners in total and with barriers. You may be hands-on in a group of 10 learners where 5 have barriers but not in a gr 1 class with 20 to 36 learners".*

One professional therapist explained that she went to an IE hearing impaired workshop presented by a school for hearing impaired learners.

PS2: *"It works for them because there's only one disability- learners in the hearing impaired range from hard of hearing to deaf. The educators understand the teaching methods for the hearing impaired - know how to place and support them, even if they have a secondary disability the primary one is still hearing. And most importantly they are only 4 learners in a class. Quality education is not difficult then, is it? So, I don't know, having different disabilities that require different teaching methods in a Grade 1 class with so many learners, even if they are few (sigh)".*

Others continued as follows: S1: *"Our special schools are equipped, but mainstream not".*

PS1: *"...and coupled with the fact that there are no resources. It's one thing to teach children with disabilities but without classroom adaptation or any assistive devices- hectic, it makes it even harder".*

S3 concluded: *"This is heart-breaking, we're failing our learners, the system is failing us. Maybe we are all failing in the system.... From top to bottom, even the parents".*

From the above it became clear that officials felt let down by the inclusive system as implemented; and experienced numerous challenges that left them with feelings of desperation, helplessness and an inability to change the situation.

7.2.4 The psychological wellbeing of Grade 1 LSEN

District participants believed that the inclusive system may not result in the social-emotional outcome as was intended by the Human Rights movement. S4 explained it in the following manner: *You know our "slow" learners as they call them, find it difficult in schools and in the community. You will not always recognise it in gr 1. Some are shy, some are difficult and naughty, and for some, the parents say: "I can't handle this 6-year old's behaviour"- so small still. But later on, that same learner you'll find on the streets, misbehaving and an outcast in the community".*

S1 continued: *Yes, by the time they are 14,16 or 18 they sell drugs for the drug lords to make them feel better about themselves. This all started in Grade 1 when you're*

still wide-eyed and don't even understand that the system is going to leave you behind".

This situation was stressful for participants and feelings of inadequacy and helplessness to change the situation were clear, as noted above. PS2: *"We try, but we are failing them again and again. No one wants to listen. We write reports and you are going to write your report and things will not change, it never does"*. There is a perception by officials that in the hierarchy from the National government to the Provincial office, there might be reluctance or challenges to change the current situation in schools for financial reasons and time spent on policy and curriculum development over the years, to be discussed later in the study.

7.3 PARENTS

Although three separate parent focus groups were conducted in the participating schools, the discussion will integrate all the parents' comments simultaneously. Only eighteen (32%) per cent of parents or guardians attended the focus group discussions although all parents of selected LSEN were invited. Four of the parents of school 1 attended, eight participants of school 2 (consisting of three foster care parents, two grandmother and three biological parents). Six participants of school 3 (consisting of three biological parents, one grandmother and two foster care parents). When referring to parent participants below, biological parents, foster parents, grandparents, or guardians of the selected learners are included (and not distinguished from each other).

7.3.1 Views on the development of their children

Parent participants had different strategies to describe their children's developmental stages. Most parents used words like *playful, can't concentrate, likes to play all the time, busy, naughty*. Parent participants did not necessarily link the mother's use of alcohol during pregnancy with later poor scholastic progress. One foster care parent said: P8: *"Die ander is ook so stadig, maar hulle mamma drink nou nog en kan nie kyk nie, abuse. Ek dink hulle is so, dis omdat hulle die ma mis"*. (The others are also slow,

but their mother still drinks and cannot look after them. I think they are like this because they miss their mom). Although the guardians mostly recognized the impact of socio-emotional factors it seems that most of them did not connect the parents' alcohol use during pregnancy as a possible primary reason for poor scholastic progress.

Some parents conveyed that the children are very happy as long as you leave them to play, but they get upset when demands are placed on them. This also correlates with educator observations. It seemed that those parents who could compare these learners with younger children at home, or foster parents who could relate to their own children, realised that some of the children experienced developmental delays. P12 explained: *"Sy nefie wat 5 jaar oud is verduidelik en help hom"* (*His cousin that is 5 years old explains and helps him*). One parent whose child has a diagnosed syndrome said the doctors never explained to her what is *"exactly wrong"*. Therefore, it seems that poor communication, lack of public health information or miscommunication from health officials and educators might be a concern.

7.3.2 Views on social-emotional influences

Most parent participants conveyed that their children are not complaining about school or the educator, although there were some concerns about the peer group. P10 said: *"Yes, I think my child is happy with the educator, although he sometimes complains about incidents with friends. Mostly I think he does not have many friends at school"*. P11 stated: *"Yes, children can be nasty sometimes"*.

P3 explained: *"Die problem is, ek is die oom maar ek sien nie die kind se werk nie. Ek dink hy is happy, ek hoor nie klagtes nie. Ek is bekommerd oor die groot kinders in die community – vir slegte invloed. Ouma is by die huis maar sy is oud en kan nie altyd kyk- ek werk"* (*The problem is, I am the uncle but I don't see the child's work. I think he is happy; I don't hear complaints. I am concerned about the bigger children in the community - for bad influences. Granny is at home, but she is old and cannot always look, I work*).

The above comments indicated that there were concerns about peer group relations and being susceptible to negative influences in the broader community.

Parents confirm that their children play with friends that have also experienced difficulties or sometimes with younger friends. For example, P13 mentioned: “*Ja, sy beste maatjie is D, hulle is baie dieselfde en D sukkel ook, sê sy ma*” (Yes, his best friend is D, they are the same and D’s mom says he also struggles at school). This might be another indication of challenges experienced in the same age peer group.

Although the schools complained of the absenteeism of learners with barriers, the participating parents did not share the same concern. This might be that the group of participating parents’ children are not that often absent from school, but absenteeism might be rather from the non-participating parents’ children, possibly because the importance of regular attendance has not been realised by them or that some children are reluctant to go to school.

7.3.3 Views on behaviour

Parent participants described the selected children as sometimes difficult when they experience raised expectations. P11 explained: “*...not difficult if you don’t put demands on them, otherwise to naughty*”. P2 said: “*I think he is ok, but he sometimes not listens to his granny*”.

There were some concerns about very aggressive children. P8 said: “*Ek het my suster se kinders geneem, maar daar is baie emosionele skade, Hy skree en is aggressief maar die social worker en sielkundige kan hom nie elke week sien nie - miskien een maal ‘n maand as hulle afkom, en Fort England se waglys is ook lank en dis baie vêr. Die sielkundige het my raad gegee, maar ek weet ook nie mooi nie*” (I have taken my sister’s children in, but there is severe emotional damage. He yells and is aggressive, but the social worker and psychologist cannot see him every week – maybe once a month - and Fort England [psychiatric hospital] has a waiting list. It is also far. The psychologist gave me advice, but I don’t know). P1 continued: “*Ja hy is baie aggressief, hy spoeg, hy kom uit ‘n abusive huis. Ons het ‘n sielkundige by die skool nodig*” (Yes J is aggressive, and he spits, he comes from an abusive home. We need a psychologist at the school).

There was more than one comment of parents getting frustrated when the children cannot master the work as explained by P5: *“Ek weet ek moet nie kwaad word nie, maar as ek probeer help - ek verduidelik oor en oor en dan raas ek, dan skree hy ook. Ek dink hulle raak kwaad as hulle altyd raas kry”* (I know I must not get angry, but I try to help - I explain again and again and then I get angry and shout. Then he shouts back. I think they get angry if they are always being scolded). Another parent explained that her child is very shy and just starts crying when someone gets upset.

Most parents reported that they did not have the skills to deal with scholastic demands and sometimes with the social demands of their children as P10 remarked:

“I wish we had more support, to understand their challenges, but I’m afraid there are none”. P11 continued: *Yes, even from the clinic or someone that can help from the hospital. I am still waiting to get an appointment with the hospital OT and Psychologist. The district referred my child for therapy*. P9 remarked: *“No, they will give you a home programme because they say there’s not enough staff to do therapy, I know...”*.

Parents reported their need for professional support and believed that the lack thereof in DoE, DSD and DoH contributed to the challenges in their rural communities.

7.4 COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS’ VIEWS, RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Although growth was indicated in certain areas of development for some learners, substantial development according to the learners’ needs was not facilitated due to many issues. The reasons given by the participants were the conglomerate of many things.

There appears to be a lack of sufficient support in communities and schools, not only from the DoE but also from the DoH and DSD, restricting the early identification of learners with barriers. Linked to this was the failure of communication between the institutional and professional support networks in the community. The SIAS policy was designed to provide a tool to assist staff in the DoE to screen and identify learners with barriers. This is firstly a long and cumbersome process and secondly it is not promoted in other linked departments that should be part of the support network. Therefore,

valuable information on the learner is not conveyed and few learners benefit from this support system.

Parents as part of the network system appear to be mostly ignored, due to many reasons ranging from their limited education and socio-economic barriers to absenteeism of parents due to work demands, with many learners in the care of grandparents who are physically not capable of offering the needed support. Due to difficulties with access (due to costs and distance) and the lack of caregivers' awareness, learners enter formal schooling without being school ready. Together with language barriers (due to second language LoLT) and overcrowded classrooms, the situation becomes even more difficult.

Although the country introduced IE 20 years ago, educators are not professionally trained to support learners with moderate to high needs. It was concerning to hear that especially the newly trained educators feel inadequate to cope with LSEN, more so than the older generation of educators. This is also supported by the district officials' views, where a suggestion was made that Education Colleges should be re-introduced as the training was better suited to learner needs. This longing for change in the training system spread from the feelings of inability to respond to learners' needs, exacerbated by the shortcomings in the network of systems that caused feelings of immense stress and failure in participants. Other systemic challenges for educators include incorrect teaching methods in the Grade R group due to untrained educators, over 50% of learners in the Grade 1 group not being school ready, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient support from the district, DoE, DSD and DoH, an overloaded, inappropriate Grade 1 curriculum with too many pacesetters, too poor resources, and inadequate material infrastructure.

In response to research question 1, then, it would appear that multiple interacting systemic barriers and many curriculum changes have contributed to the challenges of the inclusive system, which does not appear to be promoting the optimal development of LSEN. This leads to a sense that SA did not create an inclusive system suited to the specifics of this context, continuing to adapt ideas from well-resourced first world countries.

B. Theme 2: The extent that the learners with barriers to learning are affected by the inclusive system, and benefit from the current education model

7.5 EDUCATORS

7.5.1 Effects of the inclusive system on learners with barriers

Educators stated that the only benefit of the inclusive system is that the learners stay in the community, although they were of the opinion that it does not exclude them from other hardships like teasing, bullying or being misused by for instance drug dealers in the community (as noted in 7.2.4). Educator participants also indicated that in the classroom it is not only the LSEN that suffer in the current system, but also the other learners in the grade one class since this is the phase where all learners start their formal schooling and need attention. **K1S** stated as follows: “*Ja, inclusive ek dink benadeel nie net die kinders met barriers nie, maar ook al die ander kinders in die klas. Hulle het tog seker ook regte*” (Yes, IE not only disadvantaged the learners with barriers but also the other learners in class. Don't they also have rights?). Educators believed that IE can only work with an involved community and parents and an efficient working government collective from the ministry to National, Provincial and District levels and to other government departments like DoH, DSD and DoJ.

7.5.2: The effectiveness of the SIAS policy and process

Educator participants stated that although they adhere to the policy, the ECDoE does not offer support as intended by EWP6 (DoE, 2001b), The educators gave the impression of hopelessness and not believing in the system anymore. **K1S** expressed the general emotions of participating educators by the following statement: “*Nee, julle policy*” (No, your policy). **A1C** commented: “*Ons is al jare besig met dit. Ek meen as die department wou ingekoop het sou hulle lankal. Dis 'n mors van tyd want niks gebeur*” (We are busy with it for years. I mean, if the department wanted to buy in, they would have done so long ago. It is a waste of time because nothing happens). These statements show how educators believe that the inclusive system has failed all

involved and instead of helping the vulnerable, it only placed an extra burden on all as also indicated in the next paragraph.

Educators acknowledged that the SIAS policy was planned as a process to help learners according to their needs in mainstream schools but can only be effective with the necessary resources and finances in place. Educator participants believed the process is too cumbersome and a waste of time. They have experienced no support from the DoE, and it is only another administrative burden placed on them. After learners are identified the screening process takes too long as there are not enough specialists in the District or DoE. Then, after learners are screened there is no one to support these learners or educators as there are no remedial educators or specialists in schools. P2M said:

“Yes, the forms are very generalized and not specific to the actual problem, and when the child is diagnosed there are no schools and only one psychologist, one Occupational therapist and one Audiologist to assist the whole district. We all know the system is not working but they let us carry on and on without any benefit for the learner”.

K2H continued: *“Ja dan doen hulle, die department, in elkgeval niks wat hulle belowe nie, nie resources, ekstra onderwysers of terapeute nie. Die kinders gaan maar deur skool en verlaat skool sonder enige skill” (Yes, then they, the department, do nothing that they have promised, not resources, extra educators or therapists. The children just go to school and leave school without any skill.).*

A2V commented: *Die distrik het nie genoeg mense nie en ons het nie tyd nie” (The district do not have enough people and we don't have enough time).*

K1S further remarked: *“Yes, learners are identified, screened and you write your report, and then what?”* Participants felt that despite the identification and screening of the learner there are not enough human or other resources or the “know-how” in districts and mainstream schools to support LSEN.

The participants stated that they know these learners need an Individual Support Programme (ISP), but they are not trained and have no adapted curriculum and cannot spend more individual time, due to class sizes.

P2M said: *“ISP, we can’t with all the learners in the class - they are expecting the impossible”*. **P1E** continued: *“Die kind individueel bystaan, ons doen dit reeds oor die jare so goed ons kan” (Individual support, we already do that over the years as well as we can)*.

Educators clearly stated that they give the learners all the individual support that is humanly possible, but they feel it is not enough for the learners with barriers to learning. Educator participants clearly expressed their need for qualified educator assistants in class.

7.5.3 Resources in schools

According to educator participants, there is a dire need for both human and other resources in all the participating schools. Basic resources are needed for all learners, not only LSEN, but these were not always available. Human resources from more Grade 1 educators, class assistants, qualified Grade R educators to specialised practitioners, as previously mentioned, are needed for the inclusive system to be more successful. Other resources according to the specific needs of learners with barriers to learning are needed in all schools.

7.5.4 Inclusive training

Although the older experienced educators felt that they will be able to accommodate LSEN in the right environment the younger educators expressed their inexperience and inability to educate LSEN. They were trained on the inclusive model but believed the training was ineffective in terms of teaching learners with barriers. The recently trained educators felt that, as **P2M** puts it: *“They go on and on about the inclusive system or whatever, but they didn’t actually aim at how to work with it. It is all terminology but there is no training in teaching you like for instance; this is what you do in a certain situation or with a certain barrier or disability”*. The educators explained that they need practical experience and not just general training because learners with disabilities require specialised education. **P1E** explained that the endorsement in special education offered six educational subjects: *“... al die pedagogieke, baie teoreties ja, maar nie hoe om met gestremde kinders te werk nie” (...all the pedagogics, very theoretical, yes, but not how to work with disabled learners)*. All

participants expressed their need for practical training in working with learners with barriers to learning. K1S expresses this in the following way: *“Leer my wat om te doen as die kind byvoorbeeld ‘n handskrif probleem het, nie die teorie rondom skryf nie”* (Teach me for example what to do if the learner has a handwriting problem, not the theory around writing). Educators expressed the need for practical training, that was also supported in the views of district officials (as noted in 7.2.2).

7.5.5. Pacesetters as a curricular tool

Educators mention that they are not allowed to review and repeat new information for learners, because of the fast curriculum pacesetters that need to be followed within strict time frames. The pacesetters are not appropriate for rural schools where more or less 50% of learners start their schooling without being school ready.

A2V describes the situation as follows: *“Byvoorbeeld, vandag doen ek getal 7 maar more moet jy begin met agt, dan oormore 9. Daar is nie tyd in die kurrikulum vir vaslegging nie”* (Today I do number 7, but tomorrow I have to start with 8, then 9 the day after. There is no time to practice and repeat newly gained information).

Educators felt that the curriculum might work for children where learners attend pre-primary school and then gr R. Currently this is not the situation in rural areas of the Sarah Baartman District. K2H noted: *“Ek verstaan hulle redenasie (DoE) maar ons kinders het nie al daai voorskoolse stimulasie nie en daar is nog language barriers ook boonop”* (I understand DoE’s reasoning, but our children did not have the pre-school stimulation and there are language barriers as well). Therefore, it seems that the participating educators reached a consensus that they are unable to cater fully for the learners' needs without barriers, yet alone for LSEN learners. They feel that the current curriculum may be successful in a first world country where all children attend pre-school but not in SA.

7.5.6. Departmental support

The educator participants clearly felt that the DoE had failed them. According to participants the department blames schools and label educators as lazy, but officials refuse to look at the failures of the system. P1E said: *“Die DoE het ons ‘n remedial*

educator belowe vir elke 10 of 20 kinders met barriers to learning maar ons wag nou nog vir die onderwyser. DoE maak net beloftes wat hulle nooit nakom nie” (DoE promised us a remedial educator for every 10 or 20 learners with barriers, but we are still waiting for that educator. DoE only makes promises that they do not honour).

P2M continued: “*We had a remedial educator a few years back, but the DoE took that post away*”. The Full-Service school are registered as such, but are also without the necessary resources. Their opinions were that although a third of their learners are registered as learners with barriers to learning they are only a Full-Service School on paper, so that the department can state that they adhered to the inclusive policy.

7.6 DISTRICT OFFICIALS

7.6.1. Educators’ ability to screen and identify learners with barriers to learning according to their needs

Officials believed overcrowded classrooms and the pacesetting to cover work contributes to the fact that educators cannot observe properly. S1 explained it as follows: “*There are too many learners in a gr 1 class. Educators will not be able to observe clearly, and the pace they need to work at do not help the learners or educator. It is too fast for most of our learners let alone our learners with barriers. They just rush to cover the work*”. District officials’ observations were that educators are not skilled enough in different barriers or disabilities to efficiently screen and identify learners with barriers to learning.

7.6.2. Resources in the district

District officials reported that part of the challenges in the system is the fact that districts are under-resourced, and the procurement process is time-consuming. I observed when the question about resources was put to officials, they all laughed and start talking all at once. Participants made comments like: *what resources? you must be joking, we scrape by, we make our own*; and it was clear that there was a sense of giving up, in trying to get much-needed resources. District participants indicated that at certain times of the year even the most basic resources like telephones, internet

access and electricity were not available. Participants indicated that they sometimes need to depend on schools to help with basic resources. S4 remarked: *"Where is our dignity, but we asked already under-resourced school to help us, it's shameful"*. This last comment gave a clear indication of the feelings of despair that were recognised in the educators as well.

Participants indicated that the existing human resources in the district cannot cater to meet the dire need in the district, as every SES need to cater to more than twenty schools. S3 commented: *"We have only one car and need to travel up to 3 hours to our schools, you arrive after 10 and need to travel back at two"*. The specialised professional support staff are unable to attend to all schools timeously. As noted earlier, only one Occupational Therapist, one Audiologist and one Psychologist serve more than 200 000 learners in 3 CMCs within the vast district, needing to travel long distances too.

Therapists and psychologists cannot provide therapy and struggle to work through the assessment waiting list of schools and learners. Tools of the trade like assessment material are not provided and participants believed that it is expected of them to photocopy test material. Such actions conflict with the regulations of the HPCSA and are ethically problematic.

PS2 said: *"We don't have test material or devices and no budget"*.

PS1 continued: *"Yes, if I come upon a child that needs assistive devices, I can't open a door and find any, like a talking calculator or whatever is needed. They promised us a year ago that our order for individual children's devices will be met but we are still waiting. Our hands are tied"*.

S2 remarked: *"If we procure it depends on if there is enough money, otherwise you know "mos" there is always the top-slicing of the budget - never enough for us"*. All district participants indicated that there are always restraints on the budget, and it is, as participant S1 explained it: *"...to be creative, but how can you be if the system cannot afford you the basics. It is just their excuse to ignore the problems in IE and blame you when things go wrong."*

District officials believed that they could offer substantial support if:

- The necessary resources were available;
- Fewer schools were assigned to them;
- More specialised staff were available in district offices.

In addition, although participants indicated that they are well trained in their field of specialty they made it clear that they are not specialists in all kinds of disabilities and are therefore not able to offer specialised support out of their field of training.

7.7 PARENTS

7.7.1 Parent Participants' views on the progress of learners.

Some parent participants believed that there was some progress, mostly reported as their children showing more discipline in general as the following comment illustrates: *"Yes, I think in terms of discipline and behaviour it is better, but he still can't read sentences. I know he can't count money"* (P17). Although parents reported that the structured environment was positive for the development of their children, there was concern about scholastic progress as indicated by the previous comment.

It also seemed that some parents were concerned about their children's emotionality as a result of scholastic pressure placed on them. P16 said: *"Hy doen nie huiswerk nie. Ek het hom nie geforse nie want hy begin huil of word kwaad."* (He doesn't do homework. I am not forcing him because he starts crying or gets angry).

Other parents report very little or no progress as stated by P6: *"Ek weet nie, ek sien nie eintlik in sy skoolwerk nie"* (I don't know, I don't really see it in his schoolwork). It appeared that although parents had concerns about the progress of the learners, but they were reluctant to interfere as they mainly believed that the school is responsible for their children's education.

Parent participants were mostly not aware of the number of learners in their child's class as the following remark from P3 showed: *Nee ek weet nie* (No, I don't know). However, P15 said: *Ek dink die klasse is te groot* (I think there are too many learners in a class). However, parents realised that the number of learners in a class prevented

their children from receiving the necessary attention, as in the following comment by P7: *“My kind is baie spelerig, ek dink nie al die kinders kan al die aandag kry wat hulle nodig het nie”* (My child is very playful, I don't think all the learners could get all the attention that they needed). Parents were aware that their children were behind in their school progress and needed more attention.

There were different views on whether a remedial stream would help. Over 50% of the group indicated that it might benefit their children if there was a smaller remedial class. Some parents were concerned that it may label their children and other learners might tease them, although P18 made the following comment: *“Hulle kom in elk geval agter dat hulle nie die werk kan doen nie, die ander kinders weet ook”* (They know that they can't do the work, the other children also know). Then P18 continued: *“Dit sal beter vir L wees as sy in 'n klassie is waar almal soos sy is. Die kinders kan haar in die klas waar sy nou is ook terg, maar ek dink nie juffrou sal dit toelaat nie”* (It will be better for L if she can be in a classroom where everybody is like her. The children can tease her in the class where she is now, although I don't think teacher will allow it).

Most parents thought that the labelling of the child would not be more or less in a remedial class than in a mainstream class. Parents indicated that emotional stability and scholastic progress is the most important to them, no matter whether it is in a remedial or mainstream class.

Parents, although they were mostly happy with the educators and expressed gratitude, believed that their children might not get the attention they needed. P14 stated: *“Teacher is jonk maar ek kan sien sy probeer en sy is baie gaaf met my kind maar daar is baie kinders wat aandag soek en educator het nie tyd. Ek kry haar ook nie geleer nie eintlik vordering nie. K is baie still in die klas en sy skryf nog nie eers haar naam behoorlik nie. Ek dink nie”* (The educator is young, but I can see she tries her best. She is very kind towards my child but there are many children that need attention, and the educator doesn't have time. I can't teach her as well, as there is no progress. K is very quiet and cannot write her name. I don't think). Parent participants were mostly concerned about the reading and writing abilities of their children, as they could easily compare these skills with those of other children.

Most parents indicated their desire to have a school in the community that would be able to cater for their children's needs. Although they were mostly grateful towards the teachers, they realised the shortcomings in the system might have a negative future outcome. A number of parents were concerned that their children might leave school without a skill and get involved with negative peer groups when they are older. Most parents wished for a school of skills in the community that would enable their children to get a job and become a contributing member in society.

7.8 COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' VIEWS, RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Although participants were not against the success of an inclusive system, they believed that it would continue to fail if the authorities did not provide more human and other resources, as well as more specialised schools.

From the government's side, the financial burden to provide the necessary resources, as noted above, might be too high. This statement is supported by numerous remarks by participants about funds not paid; and reports of not receiving promised money or resources. Participants firmly believed that a single educator cannot be an expert in all disability areas, and it cannot be expected from a single person to perform multiple teaching methods in a Grade 1 class, where learners still need to master the basic concepts of reading, writing and mathematics.

Specialised and other human resources were not sufficient to cater for learner needs to ensure dignity and education according to their human rights. Therefore, although participants recognised the government's intention to adhere to the broader plea to respect human rights, providing equal education, they reported that the current implementation of the inclusive system do not help LSEN to reach their full potential. On the contrary, it offers no future for most of these learners as the systemic barriers confound the meeting of learners' needs. Participants clearly stated that after the failures of the system over 20 years, they watch youth who are the results of this inclusive system roaming the streets in the community without any skills to show.

The inclusive system certainly succeeded in the opportunity for learners to stay and be part of their communities. Although the intentions of the planners and policy-makers were good, the system has not evolved as envisaged. According to participants, it might not be in the best interest of LSEN learners to stay in their communities at the cost of their education, and resultant social and emotional health. Officials believed that mainstream schools in communities might not offer the best opportunity for these learners to reach their full potential, due to systemic failing of this inclusive system.

These barriers already start as soon as learners enter grade R and showed readily in the school readiness results of most Grade 1 learners in participating schools. Participants concluded that inclusion in mainstream schools may lead to learners' exclusion in communities when LSEN leave school without skills, preventing them accessing career opportunities in the world of work. All of these factors contribute to these learners being more vulnerable, for example even becoming in conflict with the law. The fact that learners stayed in their communities did not necessarily lead to well-adapted and well-educated learners and might even be an infringement of their basic human rights to quality education, be safe, and be able to make choices.

When parents and learners prefer to be placed in a specialised school to ensure barrier specific education, there should be schools available to cater for their specific needs. Participants mentioned that many parents work away from home and therefore the learner stays in any event with a guardian other than the parent. Therefore, the original noble intention of keeping families together in their communities to provide the best basis for child development, becomes moot as families are separated due to parents' work contexts. It is therefore imperative to adapt the inclusive system to fit the contextual and socio-economic needs.

C. Theme 3: The key informants' views of the education model, in achieving the international human rights objectives and the constitutional imperative, to serve the best interest of the learner with special education needs.

7.9 EDUCATORS

7.9.1: Dignified treatment for LSEN according to their Human rights

Educators' views were that the inclusive System in South Africa is not in the best interest of the child as **K1S** reported: *"Of course what is happening now can't be right, but this is a systemic problem. It must be changed from higher up. It is not fair towards these learners. I don't know if we have the finances"*.

P2M further commented that: *"We do not adhere to their human rights, as we can't cater for their needs. On paper, everything looks wonderful but impossible in practice in our situation"*.

One of the concerns was that they believed it is a system borrowed from Europe and is not suitable for SA circumstances. Educators noted that the limited finances in South Africa prevented the system from following the regulations specified in policy.

Educators felt that no one benefits from the inclusive classroom. **P1E** *"...terwyl jy met die agterosse werk, sit die ander en wag en kan nie aangaan met nuwe werk in 'n graad een klas nie"* (While you are working with the slower learners the rest can't go on with new work in the Grade 1 class). **K1S** continued: *"Yes, it's undignified to not only LSEN but also the fast group that need to go on"*. Educators were of the opinion that all the learners in various ways were impaired in the inclusive classroom.

As discussed in the previous chapter, educators' feelings of inadequacy to support LSEN and the reported lack of or inadequate systemic support was one of the main concerns, together with the reported gap between theory and policy in classroom setups that were not conducive to teaching and learning. Therefore, the need of specialised schools in the community or different lanes in a mainstream school were raised by them.

Views on the educator's ability to deal with the various disabilities that may be encountered in learners: They reported many difficulties and believed that it was unfair to all learners in class, and not according to their rights to quality and equal education as intended by the human rights movement. **A1C** stated:

“Ek was in ‘n spesiale skool. Daar kon ons in klein groepies met die kinders werk en almal het gevorder so goed soos hulle kan. Maar daar het hulle ook dieselfde gestremdheid gehad, so jy het presies geweet om hulle te help en jy hoef nie ‘n klomp verskillende leertegnieke in een klas te gehad het nie” (I worked in a Special School. We had small groups of children and they could all progress according to their ability, but they also had the same disability. You knew exactly how to teach them without having to introduce different learning techniques).

Educators believed that it is almost impossible to teach Grade1 learners according to their specific needs in an overcrowded classroom with many different barriers to learning by using all the different learning techniques in one lesson to accommodate all the learners' needs.

It seemed that teachers tried to support LSEN as best they could without the necessary resources as indicated by A2V:

“Ek koop goed uit my sak uit om die kinders te help wat nie kan nie, maar op die ou einde verlaat hulle skool en dan het hulle nog niks geleer wat vir hulle ‘n skill gee nie. Kinders raak oud in die skool en ek beseft later ek kan niks doen nie” (I buy accessories out of my own pocket to try and help those who cannot cope, but in the end they leave school without a skill. They get old in the school and I realise I couldn't change anything).

The same educator explained that she had a learner in her gr 1 class who had the opportunity to go to a special school and she couldn't believe the difference in the child. According to her the learner excelled and the father is sending her pictures every year of the learner's achievements. She believed that this could happen for all LSEN if placed in an environment that can cater to their needs.

The educators seemed desperate for help as A2V explained: *“Sometimes I struggle to sleep at night, trying to make plans.”* A1C continued: *“Ja die ou sisteem waar ons die basis vasgele het in Gr 1, dit was goed en die meeste van daai kinders is nou verpleegsters, onderwysers, prokureurs en dokters so dit kon nie so sleg gewees het nie. Selfs die stadige kinders het beter gevaar. Die sisteem laat ons in die steek. Ons het nie eens een remediërende onderwyser nie – dis so stresvol jy weet”* (Yes, the old

system where we captured the basics in grade 1, it was good and the most of those children are now nurses, educators, lawyers and doctors, so it couldn't be that bad. Even the slower learners performed better. The system failed us. We don't even have one remedial educator – it is so stressful you know).

I realised that there were feelings of hopelessness amongst the Grade 1 educators as they realised that they and the system are failing the LSEN and they believed that no one listens to their cry for help. It was clear that these circumstances also had an impact on their stress levels, as they feel responsible and guilty.

7.9.2 Views on the CAPS curriculum to serve the best interest of LSEN

Participating educators felt that CAPS is a curriculum for a first world country and does not suit most of South Africa's rural areas. Participants mentioned that CAPS might work for the privileged schools where children are well stimulated by their parents and attended pre-school from a young age. Educators also suggested that CAPS can only be successful with a high level of parent involvement, but that is not the case in most rural schools as discussed under the next heading. The participants' opinions were that CAPS does not serve the learners' needs and can therefore not benefit the LSEN learner in class.

The overall opinion of educator participants was “back to basics.” A1C stated it clearly:

“Jy weet daar was 'n tyd in die verlede toe ons ook groot klasse gehad het maar in Grade1 moes ons vir kinders die basis van lees, spel skryf en wiskunde geleer het. Daar was toe ook kinders met barriers maar ons kon hulle leer want daar was tyd om stil te staan by 'n begrip en dit in te oefen” (You know there was a time in the past that we also had big classes, but in gr 1 we had to teach the learners the basics of reading, spelling and mathematics. There were also children with barriers, but we could teach them because we had time to spend time on a concept and practice it).

As also discussed earlier, although educators felt that they are capable to teach most LSEN, the CAPS curriculum without any leniency for learners that need more time did not allow them to do so. The educators felt that the curriculum should start with more basic instructions of reading, writing and mathematics.

7.9.3 Parent involvement in the inclusive system to serve the imperative of learners benefitting from staying in the community

Educators explained the importance of parent involvement in the inclusive system to succeed. K2H commented: *“Our parents think it is the educator’s job to educate their children, it also might be that they themselves are illiterate and some of the grandparent guardians cannot speak Afrikaans or English. So, I guess it might be difficult for them”*. The general feeling of educators was that parents do not understand the importance of stimulation and support at home and are not involved in their children’s school activities, while IE advocates parent involvement.

School 1 was mostly satisfied with the role that their parents play in their children’s activities, although they suggested that their parents also find it difficult to offer the correct support to their children with barriers. The participants of school 1 found it relatively easier to communicate with their parents and the parents tried to do what was expected of them. Participants of School 2 and 3 expressed concerns about parent involvement mainly due to their challenged socio-economic circumstances as previously discussed and parents’ outlook that is the school’s responsibility to educate their children. K2H said:

“Party kinders sit net voor die TV. En dis gerieflik vir die ouers” (Some parents let their children watch television at they because it is easier for them). A1C confirms *“Ja daardie kinders kan vir jou die prentjie se maar die storie is weg”* (Yes, those children know the picture but cannot tell the story). A2V continued: *“Ja, jy kan duidelik die agt ouers sien wat hulle kinders stimuleer, maar meestal is daar nie eers storieboekies in die huis nie en ouers vertel ook nie meer stories nie”* (Yes you can easily recognise the eight children whose parents stimulate them, but usually there are no storybooks in the house and parents don’t tell stories anymore). A2V: *“In CAPS het ons die ouers nodig (In CAPS we need the parents), but they refuse to get involved”*. Educators indicated that parents should take responsibility and become more involved with their children’s education as the parents’ contributions and support plays an important role in IE.

7.9.4 Educator wellbeing and its influence on LSEN

As mentioned in chapter 6, the stress levels of all participating educators seemed to be a concern and four of them mentioned not sleeping well at night. P2M stated: *“IE makes your stress levels really high because you know that you are leaving some children behind, but you don’t have a choice. You also can’t rely on parents as they are sometimes not literate, or drinking, or working far from home, or just not investing in their children. You can’t sleep at night your stress levels are so high, keep going, keep going, keep going”*.

Educator participants understood the importance of being calm in class but according to them, they find it difficult at times. They realise that their behaviour influences the learners but mentioned that the continuous stress to adhere to the demands of the inclusive system without resources or support is taxing. I confirmed these remarks during observations in focus group discussions when voices were raised, and feelings of frustration and hopelessness were clear.

7.10 DISTRICT OFFICIALS

7.10.1 Opinions on policy versus practice

All participants believed that even if they understand the policy and try to adhere to the system, it is an impossible demand that is idealistic on paper but is bound to fail in practice. PS1 said: *“The policy and theory are very clear, and it sounds wonderfully perfect, it’s ideal but as soon as we start in the practice there’s a lot of systemic problems”*. Participants believed that South Africa imported policy from better resourced countries; but did not adapt it to cater to the needs of South African children. S1 commented: *“They are taking first world countries’ policies from the UK and New Zealand – using structures, techniques and resources that are available in first world countries and try to apply that to our third world country where it is not the case. We can’t use first world country frameworks”*. S4 continued: *“People on top, writing all these foreign policies must get off their thrones and come down to meet realities in schools and look our children in the eye. We will not succeed unless theory can meet reality”*.

Further, they noted how much the policies had been changed in a period of twenty years. S2 noted: *“They change curriculum all the time – chop and change – don’t stick to one and try and sort one out. If things are not working, they just jump to another one, and another and another six times, I think”*.

One of the participants mentioned that in his opinion even the schooling in the apartheid days was more effective as stated here: *“We had a child with us in the class with multiple disabilities since grade 1 and he managed to write matric. The syllabus before CAPS and OBE worked well. The pacesetters were not so strict, and you could repeat... and the quality was good as many of us became doctors and lawyers and professionals”* (S1).

The above comments underline the sense of frustration with the current system and the inability to make it work. Officials longed for a resourceful system that stayed constant, for them to continue their work.

7.10.2 The implementation and success of the SIAS process

District participants stated that the SIAS policy was intended to support the learners and provide resources. From a human rights point of view, it should ensure that every learner would get quality education according to their potential as intended. The SIAS process, however, although well-intended is cumbersome and it is difficult to convince educators to continue with the process, because they felt no one benefits from it. PS1 commented: *“SIAS looks at first glance well on paper and the way they structured it, but very hard to implement successfully because of all the systemic barriers”*.

Participants believed that the form is too long and not specific. S3 said: *“If you speak about reading and writing it doesn’t speak to the specification, it will just say: “What is your concern?” That is why you find from time to time when you go through your SIAS document that the educator is not responding to specifics. Then you must go back and ask: What is it that you have identified? It’s very time-consuming”*. Participants suggested a tick list as an alternative, to help educators identify specific challenges

Then, provision of the system to support learners as part of the SIAS process is not in place. S4 noted: *“The few special schools have such a long waiting list, our learners never get in, we put them on ISP that the educators can’t implement, they progress until they leave without skills”*. S1 continued with: *“Let’s say, you know I think the main problem is infrastructural problems because the child for instance who is supposed to be placed in a skills centre cannot be placed, although the recommendations are made”*.

Participants believed that learners are screened, identified, and assessed but due to systemic failures, the support of these learners does not happen according to their human rights. PS2 explained it in a stepwise manner as follows:

“The educators tell us we are wasting their precious time. They say: We finish our SNA1&2 for learners, you assess and give recommendations and then what? We load diagnosed learners on SA-SAMS but never get a remedial or even an extra educator, if we complain about our PPM provincial says it’s right, there are no space in special schools or skills training centres, we can’t follow a proper ISP. So, tell me why we must complete our forms? SA-SAMS also does not make proper provision for learners with barriers in mainstream schools and there are no report cards for learners on an ISP. The end year schedules only make provision for children in the academic lane. Maybe that is why curriculum officials don’t understand ISP’s or learners with barriers, although I suspect they should”.

This statement explains the failure of the system in providing resources and support, with theory not supporting practice.

7.10.3 Accommodation and support of the inclusive system concerning LSEN learners’ human rights

District participants responded that at times it appears as if the system goes out of their way to accommodate learners with barriers in their communities and mainstream schools, however they do not support them or the schools according to the learners’ needs. PS1 gave the following example:

“Last year we had to urgently place an out of school wheelchair learner at the request of the MEC and Provincial Office. The willing school accommodated the learner on the promised based that infrastructure will be provided, but the

infrastructure is not there a year later in spite of our recommendations. Also, we could only visit once as we are understaffed with high needs and the vastness of the district. Yes, I feel guilty and responsible, so I phone the principal and try to give advice”.

It was clear that district officials felt incapable to control or manage the system. This led to feelings of hopelessness and guilt.

7.10.4 The probability of learners with barriers to learning reaching their full potential in our mainstream schools

Although the intention of EWP6 in theory is to adhere to children’s rights in designing an education system which ensure equality and opportunity for all learners to reach their full potential, it seems many challenges in the system prevents practice to meet theory.

Participant S1 stated that:

“EWP6 clearly indicated that all learners must have equal opportunity to reach their full potential but we as an education system clearly cannot live up to the policy. We fail, starting with structural challenges- infrastructure in schools, under-resourced schools and districts... so how do you think we can provide quality education for our LSEN learners”?

Although participants indicated that the inclusive system might have worked if the country had the finances and the will, we still need to make it our own and not just borrow and use a foreign policy. They indicated a desperate need for change in the current system that they believe not only harm learners with barriers but the country as a whole.

Participant S4 explained the following:

“When we talk of dignity and human rights, we should prepare learners to have a future and a career, whether it is a skill or becoming an artisan or a lawyer, but it seems we forgot all about skills training... and I think that it may harm our country as we will have large groups of people that we haven’t trained to read or write as best as they can. They are also not trained in any skill or career. They just leave school without any hope or future.” S2 continued: *“Yes, IE just helped them to stay in the community and used by the drug lords.”*

The above statements clearly indicated the feelings of failure and despair of officials to act in the best interest of LSEN in the current system. They indicated a need for specialised skills training to afford LSEN learners a dignified future.

7.10.5 Opinions on systemic changes in the best interest of Learners with barriers to learning

Participants highlighted the lack of intersectoral communication in the district and the DoE in general and suggested that different messages confuse educators. S1 stated:

“...but if you look at the system and how the curriculum is structured-sometimes you might suggest how the instructions can be differentiated but at the same point the educator that you are advising are monitored by different people, there are a curriculum official, there’s you on the other side. The message that goes across is not the same. I think that is where the problem is. We don’t speak the same language in the district office as we cascade to schools. So that is also a systemic barrier. If we (officials) speak the same language, I think we will do a better job”.

Participants believed that education must focus on our country as a third world country and make provision for our specific needs in education. According to them, we need a curriculum that caters for and makes provision (in terms of pacesetters) for LSEN.

As previously discussed, the need for the government to adapt educator training to accommodate LSEN as stated by S3: *“Universities are contributing a lot towards killing IE. A one-year PGCE Programme is not enough.”* Their views were that IE must start with the will of the government and National office to bring coherence to the system as indicated in the following statement by S2:

“Without the incentive of National to bring upon a system where all provinces and district speak the same language. If we don’t have a top-down approach with the necessary resources and tools it will stay a pipe dream. All starts with government, not on paper but in practice”.

District participants views were that the current inclusive system needs to change to enable practice to meet theory. The believed that this can only happen through better intersectoral collaboration, initiated by the government

7.11 PARENTS

7.11.1 The inclusive system and the best interest of the child

None of the parents had read the inclusive policy and only one parent only conveyed that it was the new system after the apartheid system. Only a few parent participants had a partial understanding of the inclusive system and stated that it was not important what system is used, as long as their children get proper schooling. Parents who showed some understanding of the system were mostly from school 1 and commented that they picked up some information through the media or school, and understand that their children are allowed to stay in mainstream schools if they prefer that.

Some parents of the fee-paying school were concerned that the school might compel them to place their children in another school if they do not pay school fees. Another parent's concern was about not getting space in a special school if she deemed it better for her child. P13 stated:

"It is all ok to say your child can stay in mainstream but if she's not getting the education, she needed I would rather like placement in a special school in Port Elizabeth where I know they are equipped to help her. Her obtaining a skill or maybe having the opportunity to go to a college is far more important for me than staying at home. We are talking of my child's future and fitting in the community- what if I'm not there anymore".

It appeared that most parents preferred to make the decision about school placement as they preferred, in the best interest of their children. They wanted to have facilities available to enable them to have options about school placements, whether it is mainstream or specialised facilities.

7.11.2 Views on the educators in the inclusive classroom

As noted earlier, none of the parents complained about the educator in relation to their children. Generally, they expressed gratitude, P16 said: *"I know how busy the educators are and how hard they work but sometimes I wish that I knew how I could help my child"*. Some parent participants commented that they were not aware of their

children experiencing barriers to learning before they entered formal school. However, all participating parents of school 1 said that they did expect it, because already in pre-school as the educator had informed them. P9 stated: “Yes, *the teacher told me, but I already knew from pre-school. I just hoped it will get better*”.

Parents wished for better communication from the educators, although they also mentioned that they usually would not contact the school to make an appointment. It seemed that parents expected the educator to inform them as indicated by P1: “*My kind is baie spelerig. Ek dink die skool het gefail. Ek wou hê hulle moes meer aandag gee en se wat ek moet doen*” (*My child is very playful. I think the school had failed. I would prefer them to give more support and tell me what to do*). On the question whether she contacted the educator she replied: “*Nee, die skool moet my bel of roep*” (*No, the school must phone or call me in*). This statement correlates with the educators and district officials beliefs that parents expect the school to take responsibility for their children’s progress. P4 said the following: “*Ek sien die kind se boek maar weet nie wat gaan aan. Ek woon oueraande by*” (*I see my child’s book but doesn’t know what’s going on. I attend parent evenings*). Parents expressed their need for better communication but expected it to be initiated by the school.

A few parents mentioned that parents must also take responsibility for their children’s progress, but mostly they were not sure what to do. P6 said: “*Ek dink ons ouers het ook ‘n problem want ons is nie betrokke nie, net sekere ouers, die ander dink dit is die educator se problem*” (*I think our parents also have a problem, because we are not involved, only some parents- the rest think it is the teacher’s problem*). P11 stated: “*Yes, we also must take responsibility, want dis my kind en ek moet sorg. Ek kan nie net van juffrou verwag om alles te doen nie, sy het baie kinders*” (*...because it is my child, and I must provide. I cannot expect the educator to do everything, she has many children*).

Participating parents were concerned that their children did not progress according to the norm and there was a feeling of uncertainty about the correct action to take. P15 said: “*Ek weet nie, hy kan steeds nie lees of somme maak nie, sy nefie is beter as hy. Ek kan nie se of hy aandag kry nie. Ek sal hom graag in ‘n skool wil sit wat hom kan leer, jy weet ‘n special school maar ons het nie een nie en hy is klaar in die Full-Service*

school. Ek weet hy het 'n probleem want sy ma het baie gedrink, nou nog, maar as hy net 'n skill kan leer, net iets dat hy nie in die strate land nie" (I don't know. He cannot read or do sums; his cousin is better than him. I cannot say if he gets attention or not. I would prefer to put him in a school that can teach him, you know a special school, but we don't have one and he is already in the Full-Service School. I know he has a problem because his mum drank a lot, still does, but if he can only learn a skill, something that keeps him off the streets).

This comment summarized the parents' distress and the fear that their children might end up roaming the streets and become involved with negative elements in society if there is not the option of quality education for them, according to their needs.

Parent participants were mainly concerned about the lack of enough support services. P8 stated:

"My kind het 'n Occupational Therapist nodig. Hy kan steeds nie sy naam skryf nie, maar ons het niemand, nie eers remediërende educator nie. Die skool se die therapists kom net elke tweede week maar die waglys is lank. Ek het nie geld vir private nie, maar hier is ook niemand in private nie" (My child needs an occupational therapist. He cannot write his name yet, but we have no one, not even a remedial educator. The school says the therapist are here every second week, but the waiting list is long. I don't have money for private, but here is also no-one in private practice).

This parent's statement describes the desperate situation in the different communities and concurs with the educators and district officials' concerns about the shortage of human resources and professional support services.

The parent participants thus did not clearly understand the inclusive system, although they realised that their children had the right to schooling in the community where they reside. Parent participants were most grateful for their children's opportunities to attend school, but realised that it may not be the best education for their children's specific needs. Although concerned about possible labelling, they communicated that a remedial classroom could be the answer for their children's educational needs. Most parents were concerned about negative influences in the community as they realised that their children were vulnerable. Parent participants were concerned by the lack of specialists and services in the community and also the fact that they could not afford

private specialists to render services for their children. Although most parents would prefer specialised quality education, they made it clear that they could not afford special school placement far from home.

7.12 COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' VIEWS, RESEARCH QUESTION 3

It is clear from the above that all believed that there were serious issues affecting the functioning of the overall school system. The educators and district officials agreed that the shortage of human and other resources, the cumbersome SIAS process and the shortage of specialised schools and skills centres infringed on the learners' human rights. All participants expressed their need for specialised schools in the community to support parents' and learners' human rights imperative of quality and dignified education. Although some parents were concerned about the possible labelling of LSEN, they chose quality education in a specialised school above staying in a mainstream school that cannot cater for their children's needs. All participants were also concerned about LSEN learners falling victim to the poor socio-economic circumstances in neighbourhoods as these learners cannot enter the labour market without a skills qualification.

Inclusive policies and the SIAS process should assist the educator in identifying learners, but because of the negativity around the SIAS, educators rather perceived the process as another burden in their busy schedule. Their experiences were that the outcome of this cumbersome process held no benefits to the school or learner either than diagnoses. This was confirmed by district officials and participants expressed the need for an inclusive system designed for South African circumstances, taking into account the financial ability of the country as well as the demographics of communities with sustainable policies not only in theory but also in practice to adhere to the human rights and the dignity of learners with barriers to learning.

Both educators, district officials and parents expressed their need for better communication between parents and educators in the best interest of the children. Although educators and district officials realise parents as the primary carers should

take responsibility for their children's education, the parents wanted the school to take responsibility and initiate any actions and activities. This might be because parents are uninformed about the inclusive system, although the fact that some learners were placed with guardians and parents working away from home might also contribute to poor communication. In addition, historical issues of lack of access might also inhibit parents from taking more action or having a sense of agency in relation to schools.

Participants reported that the current inclusive system as experienced in the Sarah Baartman District was not in the best interest of grade one learners with barriers to learning and pleas for change were evident in many participants' comments. Parents and learners should have the right to choose their children's schooling. The need for specialised schooling in the community became clear, as it was important for parents that their children obtain a skill that could ensure the possibility of future work for their children.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the midst of calls from some researchers in Southern African countries to decolonise the IE system (Sayed et al., 2017; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018), I investigated the impact of the inclusive system on learners with barriers to learning, entering formal schooling in a rural Eastern Cape district. Chapters 6 and 7 covered the participants' views on the development and progress of selected grade 1 learners with barriers to learning, in three selected schools. These explored the extent of the inclusive system in reaching its goals to provide quality education to these learners, according to their human rights. Chapter 8 aims to summarise and expand upon the findings of this study.

The inclusive model (DoE, 2001) in South Africa strived to enable school access to all learners with disabilities in their communities. This was predicted to be an important step for the human rights and social acceptance of these learners, particularly in rural communities where commonly illiteracy, cultural beliefs, and misunderstandings abound about these children (Pretorius & Steadman, 2018). These might lead to practices of social neglect or hiding such learners in communities. Although access to education might have changed some cultural beliefs, it has not necessarily improved the delivery of quality education (Donohue & Bornman, 2014) according to the learners' needs.

The research described in earlier chapters explored the extent of the fulfilment of the IE dream of achieving better education. Such aspirations are to afford every learner with a learning barrier or disability, the opportunity to reach their full potential and be able to participate as equal members of society (UNESCO, 1994b). I decided to investigate the onset stage of formal schooling, through focus upon a group of grade 1 learners with barriers to learning in three rural mainstream schools. By following their year-long journey, as observed by the educators, district officials and parents, I aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the inclusive system impact the development and psychological wellbeing of the grade one learner with barriers to learning, in mainstream education?
2. To what extent are the learners with barriers to learning affected by the inclusive system, and what are the benefits of the current education model?
3. What are key informants' views of the education model, in achieving the international human rights objectives and the constitutional imperative, to serve the best interest of the learner with special education needs?

In chapters 6 and 7, data were reported in relation to the above questions. A summary of the perceptions of IE in achieving its goals in the selected rural area of the Eastern Cape will be discussed further below.

8.2 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS IN RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

8.2.1 Q1: The impact on learners' development and wellbeing

Learners with barriers to learning mostly experience some developmental delays (Adelman & Taylor, 2017), but all learners can make gains in learning with suitable stimuli by considering their barrier-related challenges. When considering changes and evidence of development according to the informants, most of these learners, considering the pace of the rest of the group, were falling behind. A contributing factor was some educators lacking confidence in educating LSEN. Participating educators acknowledged that they perceived that they had failed in giving learners the barrier-specific education that was needed, to reach expected outcomes according to their potential. This was mainly due to concerns that they were not sufficiently trained (Mahlo 2017b) to support LSEN to reach their full potential, in an environment with many contextual and systemic challenges, as also found in previous research (Mc Connachie, 2013, Maher, 2009; Mthethwa, 2008; Riesler, 2012).

Thomas et al (1997) contemplated that disability is caused by the restrictions within the environment. Major contributions to this were noted as various systemic barriers that were encountered related to the delivery of services from the DoE, DSD and DoH.

The resultant unsatisfactory scholastic progress contributed to the social and emotional challenges of most of these learners that were evident in their behaviour.

The informants reported positively that the IE nutrition programmes contributed to the general physical health of learners, since many learners were from low socioeconomic communities, coming to school without having had food. Teachers reported that learners received breakfast porridge in the morning and a meal later in the day. Both schools benefitting from this programme reported that their learners concentrated better after the morning meal. The nutrition programmes were evidence of one aspect of the inclusive system benefitting the learners.

Structured physical developmental programmes with goals of enhancing learning processes were reported not to be part of the grade 1 curriculum and therefore could not help most learners with barriers to developing better gross- and fine-motor coordination, and visual perception skills according to the expected level for grade one. As educators followed curriculum pacesetters, they reported that there was not enough time in the day to do extra activities with their learners with barriers. It seems that physical activities are only planned to occur during 5% of the Life Orientation subject. Life Orientation as a subject forms a very small percentage of the curriculum, without developmentally orientated physical developmental programmes.

Social acceptance of LSEN amongst their peers and the community were acknowledged as a benefit (Mag et al, 2017; Robinson & Goodey, 2018) of IE, and this aspect is also supported from a human rights perspective (UNICEF, 2019). In the current study however, it was evident that social bonding occurred mainly amongst the LSEN themselves, rather than more broadly with their peer groups.

The direct neighbourhood or society in which the learners with barriers grow up are also said to recognise them, but many peers do not socialise with them in general. These reports of challenges in the neighbourhood of these learners are also supported by the findings of Baker and Donnelly (2001), where children with disabilities experienced discrimination issues that are entrenched in the community. Some of this study's informants expressed their fears that these learners might become problematic to society when they reach puberty (as reported in Bender & Wall, 1994), since

participants reported that many LSEN might leave school without a skill. Teachers and parents reported that many of such learners appear to be vulnerable and are perceived to be easily influenced by drug traffickers or criminals for other illegal activities.

The academic and social challenges encountered and described above seem to lead to emotionally uncertain children with low self-confidence (Baker & Donnelly, 2001; Bender & Wall, 1994; Elias, 2004). This reportedly appeared as either shyness or aggressiveness, where some learners presented with behaviour problems in class and at home. This lack of confidence also influences their schoolwork, where they seek constant attention from the educator. The attention-seeking of these learners frustrated educators because in their work with other learners they felt that they were pressed for time to progress through rigid pacesetters. This cycle of events reportedly repeats itself throughout the year, adding to unhealthy education practices and elevated stress levels of educators, and learners with barriers to learning, alike. This then might further impact the development and ultimately the psychological wellbeing of the learner (Engelbrecht et al, 2003; Weeks & Erraday, 2013).

In response to challenges experienced by educators, along with my understanding and experience as a psychologist in education, I believe that the interconnections of the systemic barriers in the classroom are also contributors to the challenges experienced. These start with overcrowded classrooms, where over 50% of learners were reportedly not school-ready (see sections 2.7; 3.2; 3,6 and chapter 6). A single educator who has had limited training in teaching and accommodating a diverse range of barriers, without resources or assistance, is then also asked to appropriately teach LSEN according to their specific needs. This seems to be exacerbated by a curriculum with inappropriate pacesetters for the Grade 1 child in a rural area. Furthermore, informants reported a high rate of absenteeism of LSEN, since they find it difficult to cope emotionally, socially, or scholastically. The year ends with a child not reaching his or her milestones, with the prediction of possible future psychological barriers.

The following model shows a comparison of learner needs versus the impact of the current inclusive system on Grade 1 learners with barriers to learning, as experienced by the informants in this study.

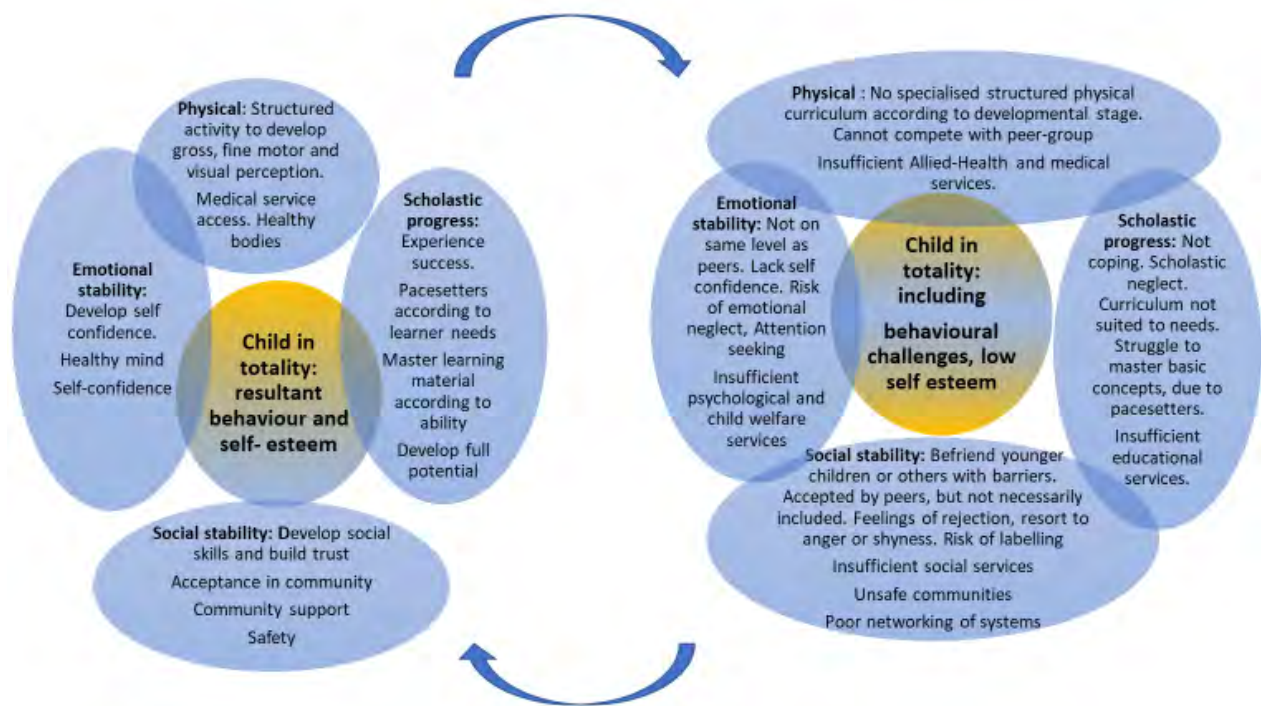


Figure 2: A Comparison of Developmental Needs of a Gr 1 LSEN to IE Achieving Goals to Meet Learner Needs

The diagram of ovals on the left shows the needs of learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive school. The outer ovals represent healthy physical and social-emotional development of the child in totality, where the outcomes will influence self-esteem and might also be visible in behaviour. The diagram on the right describes the experiences as captured from the informants' views of the LSEN in current mainstream schools. The resultant impacts might lead to poor self-esteem in the learner and resultant behaviour challenges.

Adelman and Taylor (2017) contemplate the importance of the educator in the classroom, accommodating learners according to their needs. An inclusive classroom might accommodate moderate to high needs LSEN in an inclusive school, but it also may be a separate classroom in the same school. Being in a different classroom as your friend is part of the school system and does not automatically constitute discrimination, as there is generally more than one classroom per grade. Mock et al (2002) state that there is no empirical evidence that full inclusion is the best for all learners. Kaufman et al (2014a) prefer instruction over inclusion, meaning that the learner will benefit more from quality academic instruction, according to specific needs

rather than merely being placed in an inclusive classroom without barrier specific instruction. Considering these research studies, accommodation in a classroom that caters for unique and individual needs could constitute quality education that adheres to the learners' constitutional and educational rights.

A large number of learners in a classroom complicates education (Marais, 2016), more so in the foundation phase. Several South African studies advocate for fewer children in classrooms to improve the quality of education to learners with barriers to learning (Marais, 2016; Matshipi, et al, 2017; Muthusamy, 2015). Respondents reported the need for fewer learners in an inclusive classroom, to enable them to give more attention to learners with barriers. To accommodate learners with barriers to learning, it is recommended that DoE consider extending the learner-educator ratio (LER) policy (DBE, 2010) to mainstream schools, as it is currently applicable only to special schools. The learner-educator ratio refers to the average number of learners per educator at a specific level of education in the school (DBE, 2010). The learner-educator ratio in a class should be determined by the nature of the identified barriers or disabilities and the level of needs. This would mean that a high-needs learner should qualify for a lower learner-educator ratio. This might then lead to smaller classes and enable the educator to spend more time with individual learners.

One of the main concerns experienced by participants to cater for developmental needs, was the quality and level of the training they had received prior to and during their teaching, as noted in previous SA research (Hodgson & Kumalo, 2016; Mayaba, 2008). This study found similar concerns, where educator participants expressed their lack of confidence in identifying and rendering quality education to learners with barriers. The DoE might therefore consider collaboration with universities to include more extensive programmes on learner barriers, where pre-service students also receive practical training in the variety of teaching methods for different barriers.

The grade 1 educators start the year with a large group of low needs learners, along with some moderate to high needs learners, which complicates teaching due to the diverse needs of the learners in overcrowded classrooms. Adelman and Taylor (2017) believe that educators need assistance and classroom support, enabling them to cater for diverse learner needs. Therefore, educator assistants in every grade 1 class need

to be considered. This would contribute to enabling educators to provide more multi-level classroom instruction, with variations in lesson instructions that are responsive to the individual learner.

Both educators and district officials perceived curriculum pacesetters as a challenge for learners with barriers to learning, reporting that these expected the strict following of fast pacesetters, which are not beneficial for these learners. It seems that it might be more beneficial for LSEN if these curriculum pacesetters are only a guideline of expected timeframes towards outcomes, rather than being forced on foundation phase educators. This suggestion would enable educators to teach at the learners' pace, thus responding to the way learners learn instead of the other way around.

Participants reported some concerns about the social-emotional status of the LSEN, related to their peer group who might accept them in class but do not socialise with them; as well as concerns about possible bullying. The integration of a learner into a mainstream school without the option of a class environment where the learner relates to a possibly more suitable peer group needs considerable investment in psycho-educational training. Education departments, schools, parents, and educators must avoid assumptions concerning the placement of children in inclusive classes only for the sake of inclusion, and thereby possibly forcing them into potentially harmful peer group environments (Kaufman et al. 2014a). Therefore, it is recommended that the socialisation of the class and the school should be considered. Educational programmes should be aligned to empower learners to accommodate and respect the constitutional rights to dignity, respect and the right to education of the LSEN. Such programmes might be considered in the existing Life Orientation subject.

8.2.2 Q2: The extent of the IE model in reaching its goals

Good collaboration between policy and practice (Hornby, 2015) is needed for an inclusive system to achieve learners' educational needs. The diverse interpretations of IE's meaning and policies may lead to confusion and complicate practice (Nilholm & Gorhansson, 2017; Nilholm, 2020). This study finds that insufficient networking from the top-down macro-level through the exo- and- meso level have impacted on the functionality of the micro-systemic level that directly influence the learners. The

disparity between policy (macro-level) and practice (micro- and meso-level) is one of the most prominent reasons for stakeholders believing that IE is not meeting learner needs. Informants in this research identified several gaps between policy and practice and responded that policymakers are out of touch with the needs of practice at ground level (so there is no reciprocal feedback). Informants reported that it is very difficult and sometimes impossible to meet policy expectations. The following paragraphs describe the findings of conflict between policy expectations on a macro and exo-systemic level, influencing the possibilities of implementation on the meso-level, and practical possibilities at the micro-systemic level in the Sarah Baartman District, according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eco-systemic model. The following findings strive to show the intertwined network of the systemic levels, influencing the progress of LSEN in the IE system.

Beginning from the micro-level, the findings support other studies that the lack of resources prevent quality education for learners with barriers to learning and contribute to educators' elevated stress levels and feelings of inadequacy (Eloff & Kgwete, 2007; Hodgson & Kumalo, 2016; Mayaba, 2008). In contrast to Mayaba's (2008) study, educators did not display negative attitudes towards LSEN in this study, however, they did discuss elevated stress that will influence their interactions with learners in the classroom. One of the prerequisites of inclusion is enabling education structures, systems, and learning methodologies (DoE, 2001b) that are a function of the macro- and exo-levels to support the districts on a meso-level, enabling them to meet the needs of all educators and learners in the microsystems. This study however finds an overloaded curriculum as explained previously in chapters 6 and 7, negatively affecting educational progress for LSEN on a micro-level.

Parent involvement and support from a meso-systemic level plays a substantial role in contributing to the success of IE (Afolabi et al, 2013; Afolabi, 2014). Education extends further than formal schooling and acknowledges that learning also occurs in the home and community, both within formal and informal settings and structures (DoE, 2001a). The policy EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) advocates developing a community-based support system that includes a preventative and developmental approach to support. This study finds that although EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) promotes the rights and responsibilities of parents, another contributing challenge in rural communities is poor

or limited parental involvement due to several factors. One of the contributing factors reported in this study relates to parents working away from home in bigger cities (exo-level), leaving children with a substitute parent or guardian (micro-level). These arrangements seem to be made for economic reasons. Another factor is that of children being placed in foster care, with guardians who do not feel obliged to contribute to educational programmes, having an impact through the exo-, meso-, and micro-levels of support to the child. A third reported factor is the relatively low literacy levels found in parents/caretakers in disadvantaged communities, without proper or enough support structures and services that have a direct impact on the child's development. All of these challenges derive from insufficient communication, information provision and feedback between parties and stakeholders on all levels, thus leading to ineffective collaboration and further disadvantaging the child in need in the microsystem.

In theory, EWP6 recognises the value of investing in the training (exo-level) of educators and support staff (meso-level) to enable them to identify and address barriers to learning (micro-level). This study finds that informants experienced as insufficient or sometimes vague, the training offered at the university level and the follow up in-service training programmes, in their opinion only touching on disabilities without providing disability-specific training or learner material. These findings were more so experienced by younger educators, trained in the inclusive system rather than by the older, more experienced educators in the system, who showed more confidence in teaching LSEN due to their experience, gained over time.

Early identification of disabilities and learning barriers (DoE, 2001a) that are interlinked between the micro- and meso- levels is important to support learners according to their needs. However, this depends on resources and financial support from macro- and exo-levels to enable educators to cater for the range of diverse learning needs and intervention in the microsystem. Respondents in this research reported inadequate identification and intervention due to the lack of physical and material resources (such as remedial teachers, class assistants, therapists and assistive devices). These contributed to not providing for LSEN according to their needs. The policy further promised support to schools to provide for a greater range of learning needs, but the FSS or ordinary mainstream schools do not appear to be

equipped with physical, material or specialised human resources. In addition, the schools seem to receive very fragmented support from the district officials due to insufficient human and other resources in the wider district. Shortages or the lack of human and other resources thus place an extra burden on the educator and influence the learners' development directly in the microsystem.

The DoE (2005) promotes the strengthening of special schools with improved education and that they should act as resource centres. The DoE (2001b) further acknowledges the central role played by educators and parents in the process of identifying, assessing, and enrolling learners in special schools. However, respondents reported that there are no special schools in this rural area, and parents cannot afford placements far from home.

Early identification and support of the individual learner according to needs is central. Naicker (2000) reasons that the first step towards a successful IE model is the understanding of disabilities, shaped by a medical diagnosis and underpinned by a rights model to identify barriers to learning in the system. After that, appropriate interventions need to follow. This would mean that all support to these learners cannot be shaped by a general intervention programme, as is currently believed, a “one size fits all” supported model, but needs to be barrier specific (Amstrong et al, 2016). The complex intensive educational needs of such a model are expensive and require a significant number of human resources and material resources. Although Biamba (2014) believes that IE is more cost-effective than specialised intervention, he recognises the financial difficulties of developing countries. Therefore, early identification is imperative to prepare and make provision for these learners as they enter the formal school system. To achieve early identification, compulsory pre-school for all children from grade R might be considered. Pre-school educators also need to be appropriately trained according to learners' developmental stages and in screening and identifying learning barriers.

Professional medical and professional health support teams (Seedat, 2018; Tiwadi, 2015) must be available to schools to assist with the process of SIAS. These teams should consist of adequate human and other resources to be able to serve community needs. Placement should not be embarked upon prior to the evaluation of the specific

child in respect of psycho-social and educational needs. Thereafter a placement that can offer barrier specific education should be considered, whether in a multi-stream class, mainstream class, or special school, according to the individual needs of the learner. This might better ensure dignified, quality education that will build self-esteem and emotional stability.

IE as promoted currently seems to be designed for well-resourced communities and is less successful in under-developed communities (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). Parents and communities play an essential role in the upbringing, social acceptance and support of all children. As education starts at home and in the community, the DoE (through its district support structures) might consider workshops with parents and community members on understanding disabilities. This might lead to parents gaining more insight into understanding the role they should play in the implementation of IE.

A number of the comments and suggestions above relate to improved interactions on the meso-level. The policy (DoE, 2001b) supports the development of an integrated system of education. Ideally, such a system will have enough resources (DoE, 2001b) and support systems, also integrated with other government facilities pertaining to children. This study finds that fragmented and insufficient specialised professional support services contribute to learners with barriers to learning not being identified or assisted according to their needs. It is therefore recommended that a better integrated system, with clearer communication and interdepartmental collaboration between the institutional level support teams, community stakeholders, schools and parents be considered to enable all to understand their contributing roles.

From an exo-level perspective, the policy document EWP6 (DoE 2001b) promotes the provision of resources, including infrastructure, material, and human resources according to learner needs. Respondents find the lack thereof as one of the main barriers in the system. Although not part of the research, the informants extended their comments about support needs to other government departments like DoH and DSD, where they have experienced the same shortages of human and other resources.

EWP6 (DoE 2001b) recognises the importance of special needs and support services throughout the system, promoting the holistic development of learning centres to ensure a barrier-free physical and a supportive psycho-social learning environment. Although the policy EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) promotes a flexible curriculum to ensure access to all learners, respondents reported an inflexible approach to the curriculum by curriculum district officials, without considering learners with barriers. This seems to be the result of not having effective curriculum programmes to support the diverse needs of LSEN. This study finds that the absence of special schools and allied health support centres in rural communities appears to have deprived learners with barriers to the right to quality education, as intended by the policy.

The ESSS district-based support team is designed to support teachers in planning support programmes for students with special educational needs. For the district to render valuable support to schools, officials need to be able to reach schools regularly. With the re-demarcation of the ECDoE in 2020, Sarah Baartman became a vast district (measuring 58 242 square kilometres) with under-resourced CMCs as discussed in chapter 7. The reality of this is that the few officials and professional support staff must travel long distances in-between CMCs to reach their schools and they waste valuable time in doing so. Furthermore, the limited number of staff and length of time to travel leads to officials feeling that they are mostly working in “crisis mode”, as interventions with learners and teachers are mostly a single session with limited time spent. It might be many months or more than a year before interventions are followed up, due to the number of schools and learners needing interventions. All these factors further contribute to poor intersectoral collaboration as curriculum officials concentrate on the mainstream curriculum, prescribed by fixed, inflexible pacesetters, and leave all matters concerning LSEN to ESSS officials. The recent restructuring of the organogram in the Eastern Cape shifted all ESSS Senior Educational Specialists under the curriculum section. This decision then further reduces professional support staff to one Psychologist and one Therapist in an already understaffed district!

It seems that many of the challenges experienced at the meso- and exo-levels can be related to practice not being able to meet the expectations as contained in the policy of EDWP 6 and the SIAS policy (DoE, 2014b). The Ministry of Education contemplates commitment to the provision of educational opportunities for learners who experience

barriers to learning and development and developed the SIAS policy. Respondents in the study however find the SIAS process cumbersome, without enough trained and specialised human resources to follow through with the intention of enabling support based outcomes.

The following might therefore be considered by the DoE to support district offices at meso- and exo-systemic levels:

- 1) District offices should be capacitated to the extent that they can deal with the overwhelming needs of LSEN in mainstream schools. District offices must be equipped with the necessary resources and assistive devices, enabling them to advise and support schools.

- 2) Not more than ten inclusive schools should be allocated to a fully functional professional support team, consisting of an Educational Psychologist, therapists in each specialisation field, an educational specialist trained in disabilities and remedial support, a senior educational specialist to advise on curriculum adaptation, as well as a professional nurse and a social worker. Funds must be available for the professional support team to buy tools of the trade and assessment material, as prescribed by the HPCSA and ethical regulations.

- 3) Sufficient collaboration between sections in the district office needs to be established. Senior education officials must have a distinct demarcation between the two models (medical and social) as it confuses the implementation process. All curriculum officials must be trained on the new three streams curricula and need to understand the integration thereof in mainstream schools.

This study supports other studies in finding gaps between policy and practice (Armstrong, 2010; Hornby, 2015; Nilholm, 2020). It seems policies are idealistic and adopted from better-resourced first world countries, without taking southern countries' financial possibilities and resources into account (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Engelbrecht, 2019). These policies appear not to suit the needs of learners with barriers in rural areas (Seedat, 2018). Some of the reasons for these difficulties from this research relate to learners not always attending preschool or early developmental programs, learners thus not being school ready, reduced levels of literacy and limited broader systemic understandings of parents or guardians.

Furthermore, there seems to be a disparity between the intention of EWP6 and curriculum and assessment policies, with pacesetters not making clear provisions and seemingly unachievable for LSEN. Although EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) advocates funding strategies to redress historically disadvantaged communities' and institutions' sustainability, this research found an ongoing need reported by respondents for basic resources to implement IE.

Landsberg (2005) emphasised that policy developers must bear in mind that support is the cornerstone of ensuring a successful IE system. Therefore, the government must have the will to provide education as a system with the means not only through policy writing but also through financial and other support. Norwich (2013a) believes that the strong ethical appeal for inclusion creates a dilemma in practical realisation. This study confirms that respondents find great difficulties with the practical outworking of the inclusive system in SA. This would seem to indicate that both nationally and provincially there need to be widespread discussions to improve the systems for the benefits of LSEN.

The integration of a successful IE system in South Africa starts with the government and the Council of Education Ministers (CEM). Before writing a policy, the government needs to more realistically consider available national funding, preventing a theoretical policy framework from being developed that cannot support and sustain the policy theory in practice. This research, as other studies before (e.g. Nilholm, 2020; Seedat, 2018) finds that there is a conflict between theory and practice, leaving educators and education officials with systemic barriers that do not appear to be acknowledged by higher levels of governmental officials. This thus leaves educators believing that government does not care about important matters and are trying to uphold a failing system (Amnesty International, 2021), by writing more academic policies without providing infrastructure, financial support, efficient learning material, sufficient professional support and human resources to support these policies.

The following macro systemic recommendations for the DoE might be considered:

- 1) Adapting the inclusive system by implementing a framework conducive to South Africa's needs and unique circumstances; and taking into account our financial capacity considering our vast rural districts. Better flexibility in the curriculum as intended by EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) might also allow for a model more conducive to the unique needs of learners that represent the continuum of development, such as the Spiral Spectrum Model of diversity (Trussler & Robinson, 2015).
- 2) Developing integrated, inclusive policies that consider the country's unique circumstances and different ethnic grouping and socio-economic circumstances. This may include a curriculum with flexible pacesetters and assessment policies.
- 3) Designing a post provisioning model that ensures more educators in the foundation phase should be considered. Such a model can also make provision for classroom assistants in all foundation phase classes. This model must ensure manageable class sizes to cater for learner needs.
- 4) Partnerships and a networked system between government departments might be initiated and managed by the national government to ensure equity in all provinces. By implementing the SIAS policy (DoE, 2014b) in other government departments like DoH and DSD throughout governmental provision might enhance inter-collaboration, in assisting DoE with the early identification and support of children with disabilities. SIAS should be adapted to a workable compact document not to burden stakeholders with unnecessary administration.

The DoE (2001) recognised the important role of specialised schools as part of the inclusive system in South Africa, as a means to support learners with high needs. The EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) acknowledged the considerable financial implications of implementing the inclusive system and gave a realistic time frame of 20 years for the attainment of the IE and training system. It seems though that the current system of provision is both cost-ineffective and excludes individuals with barriers to learning from benefitting in the mainstream of educational provision. The EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) proposed a mix of institutional structures, including district support systems and incorporating special schools as resource centres as a more cost-effective option than the previous education system.

It seems evident that the inclusive system is far more costly than initially thought, and since the government fails to deliver the required resources, it cannot render quality support to learners with barriers mainly due to financial constraints.

Developing countries like South Africa are often challenged with financial constraints and poverty-stricken rural communities. Policymakers need to understand and design policies that are responsive to a country's unique circumstances. In doing so, financial constraints, availability of human and other resources like infrastructure and the availability of assistive devices should be taken into account. An effective IE system can only be realised with enough funding. This will also mean creating and making available a workable financial system for appropriate support to the most vulnerable.

8.2.3 Q3: Comparison of the current model to human rights objectives and serving the best interests of the child

The DoE expressed a twenty-year goal to implement the inclusive programme in South Africa smoothly. This decision seems to be made mainly due to financial and other educational constraints (DoE, 2001b) in this developing country. Since twenty years have passed, I would like to express the following thoughts.

The implied meaning of human rights is not only affording the learner a placement in a school in the community, with a set of policies for educators to adhere to. These imply educating learners in a dignified manner to reach their full potential (UNESCO, 2006). It is the government together with the DoE's responsibility to ensure a workable system (UNESCO, 1994) with the needed support, financial and otherwise as previously discussed in the study. To serve the best interests of a child, it is imperative that decisions are made in education pertaining to the here and now, as well as the future of the learner. Therefore, it is a substantial responsibility of decision-makers to ensure a future for all learners and also to recognise shortcomings in the process. Education can only claim success when it affords an inclusive future, without discrimination (Riesler, 2012) for all learners with barriers to learning. The outcome of IE should render opportunities for these learners in the world of work through proper education, whether it is developed skills or academic competencies. Currently,

participants believe that the systemic barriers in the education system prevent LSEN from reaching their full potential in the mainstream. They fear that these learners might not obtain the necessary qualifications or in many cases, any qualification at all, where some learners might exit the system without basic reading and writing skills.

When comparing the Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) to what IE has managed to achieve in the past twenty years since implementation, this study has found that like other research (Amnesty International, 2020) IE appears to fail in providing for the human rights of learners with barriers. Respondents in schools and the district find it a daunting task to provide quality education to LSEN in the mainstream. Systemic barriers prevent equal education and therefore, discriminate against and infringe on these learners' human rights.

The South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1999) contemplates provision for participation of LSEN in educational activities by recognizing their special needs to ensure dignity and promote self-reliance. The lack of assistive devices and professional human resources thus appear to infringe on the dignity and self-reliance of LSEN. Systemic barriers prevent the successful implementation of IE and contribute towards discrimination against and neglect of LSEN by not providing sufficient specialised services. This leads to failures in recognising barrier specific needs and deprives LSEN of quality education. This neglect in the IE system is not in the best interest of these children and prevents them from achieving an equal basis for education when compared with other children as contemplated by the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Articles. 7, 23 & 24 of 2006), The Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Act no. 4 of 2000) and The Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005).

It is therefore recommended that education departments ensure that they afford all learners equal opportunities to quality education by improving the provision of the resources (Amnesty International, 2020) and support systems to schools, educators and communities.

8.2.4 School readiness and LoLT

Although not part of the study, an unexpected finding in the two quintile 3 rural township schools were that a high number of learners entering Grade 1 were not school-ready, coming from poverty-stricken communities where learners do not necessarily have access to pre-school, and in some cases, the LoLT differs from the home language.

Several sources including the DoE mention the importance of early development and preschool for children (Daelmans et al., 2017, Shin et al., 2019; Shafiq et al., 2018). The South African statistical report (2017) also indicated the levels of illiteracy and the high percentage (60,4%) of children not attending pre-school in the Eastern Cape (section 3.2). Although not part of this study, it was reported (according to the school readiness assessments and teacher observations) that over 50% of the gr 1 learners in the two quintiles 3 schools were not school-ready. Some of these learners had an additional challenge, where their home language differs from the LoLT. Both of these factors appear to be very influential, since all the educator participants raised their concerns about these two aspects, considering the expected fast pace of curriculum delivery in overcrowded classrooms, as discussed earlier.

Several studies have stated the importance of early childhood development in preparation for school readiness as a precursor for future success in school (Castro-Kemp et al., 2021; Heckman, 2006; Rossi & Stuart, 2007; Shin et al., 2019). As discussed in chapter 3.2 pre-school stimulation and development of skills (Snow, 2006) in all 6 domains of development (Pan et al, 2019) is necessary for children to become school ready and also correlates with future achievements. Pre-school stimulation is especially important for children that grow up in less affluent families to close the possible stimulation gap between them and more affluent groups (Hardman, 2012; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2016). Socio-economic factors influence the development of a child (Hardman, 2012) therefore in South Africa where poverty and lower socio-economic status in rural areas is often evident, with inadequate stimulation in most of these families (Statistics SA, 2017), good pre-school education is important. Considering the research findings on the importance of both school readiness and the home language as LoLT (see 7.1.4), especially for learners in the challenged socio-

economic rural areas of the Sarah Baartman district, it seems that these two added factors have a noteworthy impact on the learners with barriers' scholastic development.

8.2.5 Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)

Another unexpected finding that arose subsequently from this study was the high number of seemingly undiagnosed learners with mothers reported to have used alcohol during pregnancy. Several research studies on this topic have been conducted in the Western Cape (e.g. Crede et al., 2011; Mc Kinstry, 2005; Olivier et al., 2013; Hlomani-Nyawasha et al., 2020), mainly due to the role that the wine industry has played in encouraging alcohol consumption. Although Mc Connachie (2013) spoke about the concerns about resultant FASD in her study, it seems few studies have been conducted in the Eastern Cape (Viljoen et al., 2018). During a conversation with the CEO of the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR), she confirmed that they are currently busy with research in the Sarah Baartman district. According to the CEO, the prevalence of FASD in the Eastern Cape is estimated at more or less 13% of children. This is a concerning figure as FASD is a preventable condition and deserves to be looked into at all levels of the system, with a robust public education initiative put in place too.

8.3 COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Inclusion of all implies the collaboration of all governmental structures and departments. The EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) also appears to support cross-collaboration of all departments in support of inclusion. The policies seem to support theories that are sound on paper, and indeed support inclusion, but are difficult to implement in practice in a diverse country like South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2019), where financial incentives differ not only from European countries but also amongst provinces in the country (Amnesty International, 2020). This has an impact on available human resources as well as facilities that offer professional and other support.

This study confirmed and echoed previous research (Amnesty International, 2020; Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013; McConnachie, 2013) that the Eastern Cape, especially in the rural areas, does not have the means or support systems amongst all the different departments involved with children and families that are essential for implementing IE. Collaboration between government departments seemed therefore difficult to implement, as it appeared as if all departments experienced their own difficulties accessing and managing financial and human resources. Departments seemed to work in silo's, without necessarily consulting each other. This led to further barriers for learners' provision.

It was clear from informants and previous research as already mentioned, that the DoE alone cannot meet the demands of the current IE system. The DoE should consider closer communication networks, collaborating with all departments pertaining to the responsibility and rights of children in South Africa. In doing so the government should take a top-down responsibility, with a workable practical approach rather than an adopted policy (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018), where outcomes are impossible to meet. Simultaneously a bottom-up practical approach from the school and community level, together with all ground-level departmental services should be implemented, in the best interests of children. Therefore, the suggestion is to move a step further from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nested theory in education to a networked system based across Governmental Departments of Education (DoE), Social Development (DSD), Health (DoH) and Justice (DoJ).

8.4 PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION: FROM NESTED TO NETWORKED

This research study illustrates that the inclusive system as currently implemented contributes to the developmental challenges of learners with barriers to learning. As confirmed in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic theory, all factors in the ecosystem influence each other. The quality of these relations between the learner and the environment strongly influences the outcomes across the chronosystem.

As the study unfolded, it became clear that the IE system goes beyond education and cannot be successful without the wider network of support from the community, health, and social institutions. Although this study did not investigate the roles of DoH and DSD, participants reported fragmented and poor intersectoral collaboration, due to under-resourced community-based support systems.

The inclusive system will remain challenged without a sufficiently interconnected collaboration network between all the government systems. Therefore, the recommendations need to go a step further from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic model and move to the suggestions of Neal and Neal (2013), proposing a networked system. This is a holistic approach that might be considered by policy and decision-makers of the DoE. By doing so it might lead towards a dignified and successful inclusion where the DoH, DSD, as well as DoJ, support the DoE in a holistic approach, serving the human rights of learners with barriers to learning. Although EWP6 implies such an approach, in theory, current policies are too vague to support practice.

Systems across government departments appear to struggle to adhere to inclusion due to the current economic status in South Africa, poor infrastructure, and the lack of resources. A networked systems approach throughout government departments with clear policies that are better linked to practice, according to the country's ability and circumstances might contribute to successful dignified inclusion and development of learners with barriers in the IE system according to their human rights.

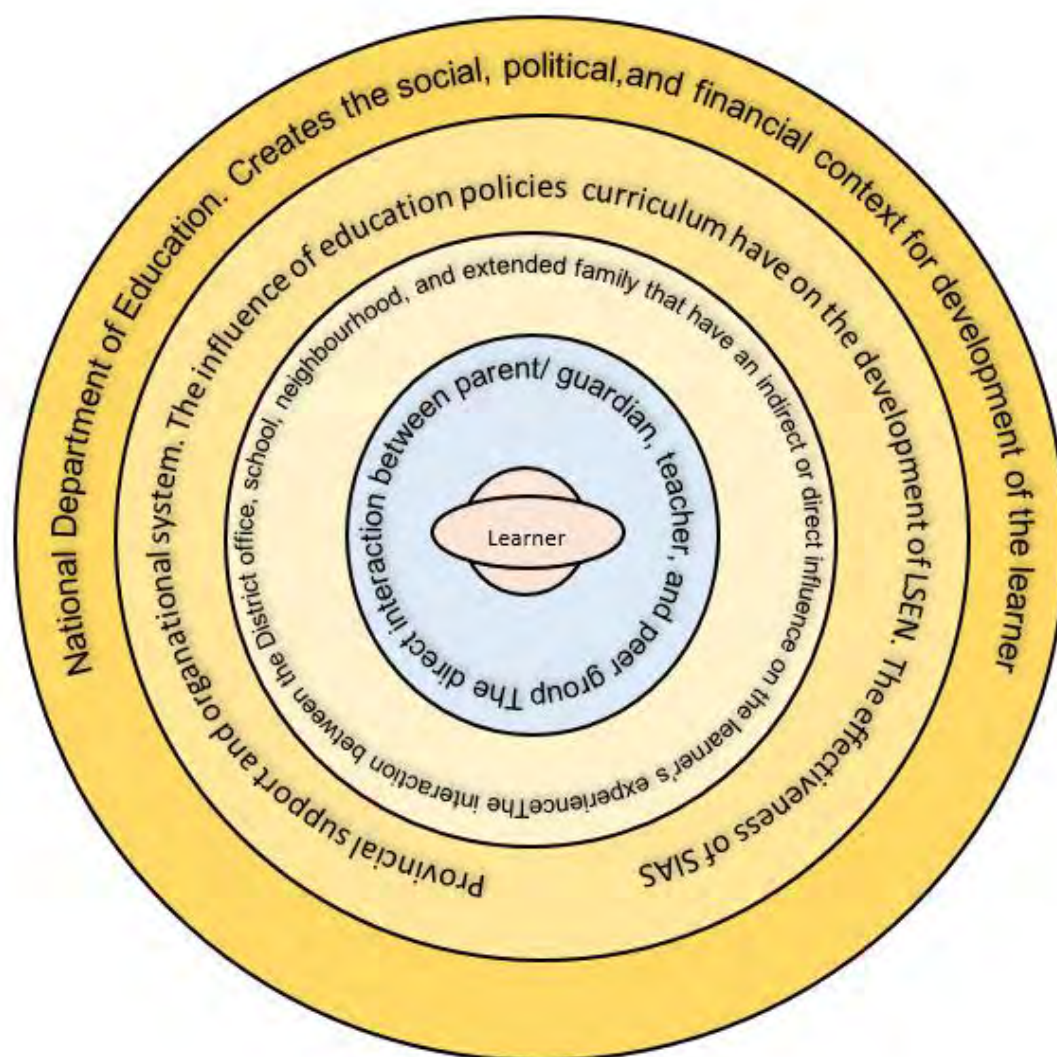


Figure 3: Example of a nested system in education

The above example of the nested system in education plays only a partial although an important role in the development and progress of learners in an all-inclusive approach. In an inclusive society, where the school forms only one aspect of the child's broader developmental needs, the nested system approach may not provide in all the children's needs to develop into a responsible and contributing human being in society.

Neal and Neal (2013) proposed a framework of a networked system that may be more flexible and effective for complex societies.

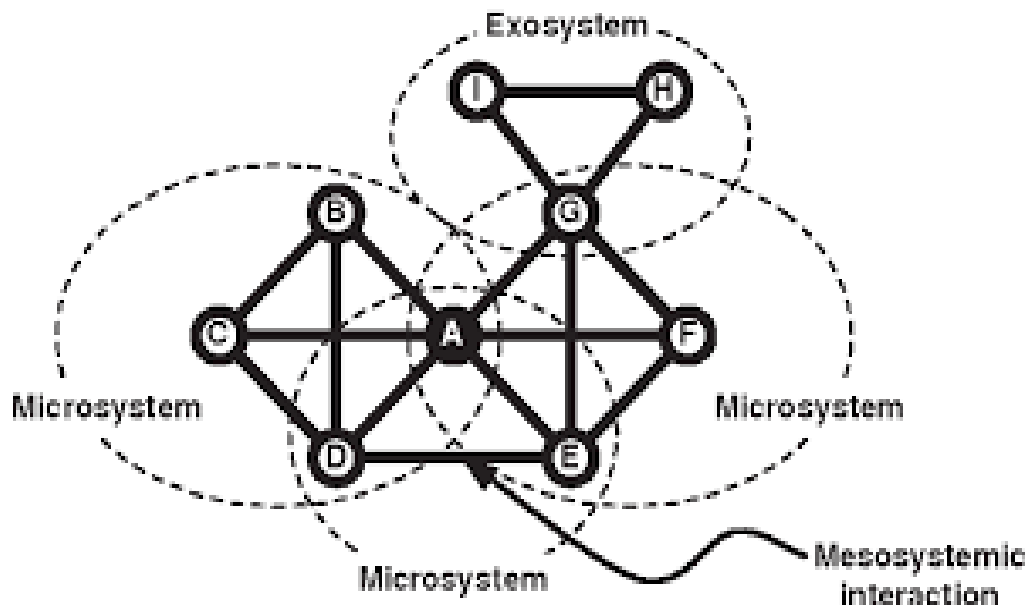


Figure 4: Example of Neal and Neal's (2013) networked system framework

Networked Model of Ecological Systems, focused on Person A, as proposed by Neal and Neal (2013, p 728).

I realised in designing a networked system for education, that this framework offers possible ideas and solutions, but maybe too complex to follow the interlink and inter-collaboration between different government departments that is proposed in this research. Therefore, I introduce below a networked approach within or combined with a nested system. An example of a design for a networked system to support inclusion will be presented. I hope to offer this design to provide a more supportive network that might better cater for learners' developmental needs in an inclusive society.

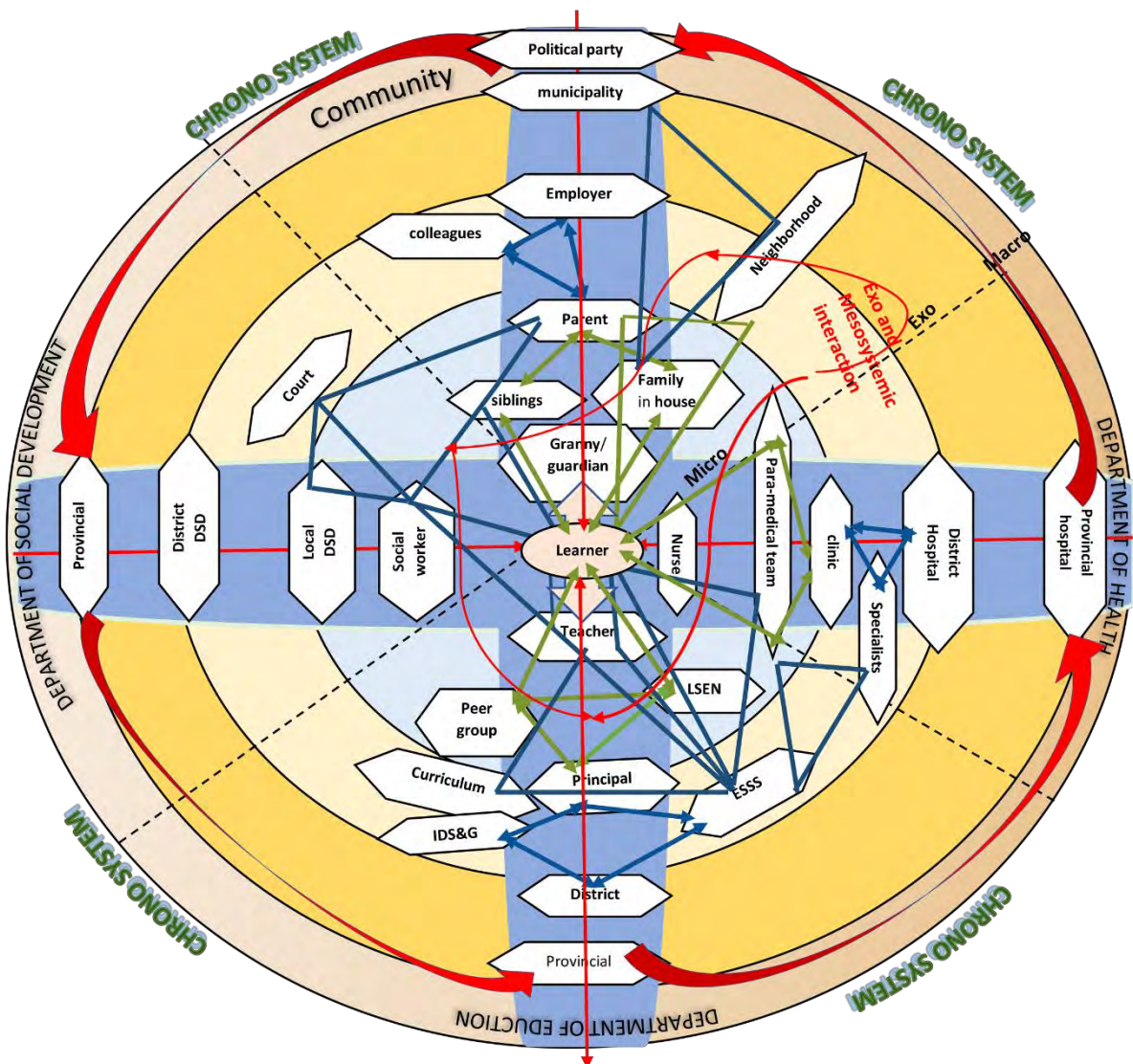
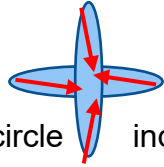



Figure 5: Networked system for IE

The above figure suggests a networked system within a nested system with broader involvement from DoH, DSD, DoJ to support DoE. The proposed network might provide holistic support to learners as learner development take place in a community and learners educational wellbeing cannot be separated from their physical and social wellbeing. A Networked approach could enable a better understanding of the specific needs of a learner where all departments work as an interdisciplinary team contributing to the wellbeing and healthy development of children in schools as part of the communities.

The networked system might ideally work simultaneously from a top-down and bottom-up approach with all sectors interlinking with each other. To begin with from a top-down perspective:




The blue cross with red arrows from the outer to the inner circle indicates the top-down influence of all departments pertaining to children, from governmental (macro) to ground (micro) level. In the blue cross, the figures that are placed right on the line between nested systems show the interlinking between each other, for example provincial, district, school principal.


 The wider red arrows indicate the influence on the chronosystem and the importance of collaboration between all departments that will complete the network system in assisting learners.

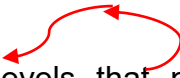
The processes described in the two paragraphs above, therefore, proceed downwards and around to show the complexity of the multiple systems in the macro-system, influencing each other. These also interact in the exo-system and right through the boundaries of each system as indicated by the thin red arrows, influencing each other to play a role in the development of a single learner.

From a bottom-up perspective:

 The green lines indicate microsystems that have a direct influence on the development of the child. The learner is participating in several microsystems which have a direct influence on development. As part of the education microsystem, the learner is part of the LSEN group interacting with peer groups and educators. The principal might also be part of this microsystem relating to some scholastic and socio-emotional matters for example when the learner is sent to the office. The learner with a barrier might also be part of a microsystem interacting with the nurse and assistive therapies team in the DoH system. The learner placed in foster care interacts with the social worker and guardian, interlinking as part of the DSD system. These interactions function as part of the community along with the educator, granny/guardian, parent, extended family in the house and siblings. As illustrated in this example, parents often

work away from home and only visit over weekends or less often and are part of a further extended microsystem that might also influence the child directly or indirectly.

 The blue lines form part of other external microsystems that might have a direct or indirect influence on the child. These microsystems also form part of the mesosystem in a nested model, where the social interaction between the participants in different settings influences the learner. The blue lines might also include the learner from the micro to the mesosystem. This network illustrated in figure 9.3 shows the complex network of all the microsystems operating in the meso and exo-system as an interlinked network between education, social development, health, the community, and justice departments. It also provides an idea of the importance of good collaboration of these departments to serve the best interest of learners with barriers.

 The fine red lines show the networked interactions on a meso-and exo-levels that play a role in the child's development. These link through all the departments and combines all the sections showing the complicity of an inclusive system when dealing with learners with barriers.

There is no doubt that there might be other elements that may be part of a networked system that have not emerged through the interviews and data collection in this study. The above nevertheless aimed to highlight the complexities and in particular all of the different layers where failure might lead to policies not resulting in benefits for the children. Resourcing challenges and interacting levels indicated in this networked system are the realities of what people are experiencing on the ground.

This networked example shows the complexity of the inclusive system as indicated by informants in this research study. It also highlights the possibilities of failure of an inclusive system if not properly managed. The fine red lines from the top down go through so many levels that they appear not to be reaching the learners.

There is a multiplier effect of inefficiency that then means the learner is not getting the services as the system would aspire to. Lines increase as they proceed down to the individual child, but it gets so disruptive that the individual child does not appear to be benefitting from the system.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

IE in South Africa started in the late 1990s to adhere to the UN's (UNESCO, 2006) plea for inclusivity for all humans in societies no matter their status or disability. The first draft of the EWP6 (DoE, 2001) forms the foundation of the inclusive system. Since then, several curriculum adaptations were made but for a long time, no adapted curriculum (Mayaba, 2008) was available for learners with barriers in mainstream schools and this aspect continues to be a struggle for educators.

My professional experience in the inclusive system motivated me to embark on this research. As a psychologist working in the rural Eastern Cape, my concerns were that the mainstream schools and educators in rural areas might not be equipped to cater for the developmental needs of learners with barriers to learning in the current inclusive system.

This research study reviewed the experiences and progress of a cohort of grade 1 learners with barriers to learning, through the experiences of their educators in the inclusive mainstream classroom, as well as sampling the perspectives of other key informants in the education system. These included parents and district officials.

The first aim was to determine perceptions of how the inclusive system might impact the development and psychological wellbeing of the grade one learner with barriers to learning, in mainstream education. The second aim was to explore to what extent the learners with barriers to learning are impacted by the inclusive system and the perceived benefits and limitations of the current education model. The third aim was to probe key informants' views of the education model, regarding international human rights objectives and the constitutional imperatives related to children, to serve the best interests of the learner with special education needs. Responses to these aims were reported, in the form of answers to research questions in chapter 8.

9.2 LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

9.2.1 Limitations

Several limitations to the study may be identified. Firstly, only three schools were selected to participate. In addition, a relatively small group of principals, educators and district officials participated. Although the schools were selected to represent similar schools in rural areas in the Eastern Cape, the findings might not be relevant to all rural districts and schools in the country.

Another limitation was that I am also a Psychologist in the DoE. Some of the district's participants are also colleagues and I am known to some of the participating educators. On the one hand, they might have felt comfortable sharing information with someone they knew, but on the other hand, there is the possibility that they might have been less critical because of my position in the district office.

Although I was thorough in explaining confidentiality issues, parent respondents might have been cautious in their remarks, thinking that the school or department may discriminate against their children. In addition, I do not speak the home language of some of the participants, which may have impacted their responses. It also seems that most of the parent/guardian participants contributing to this study are those who are involved with their children's schooling. Therefore, there might have been limitations on the information gathered concerning parent involvement, since there were parents or guardians who were unable to or unwilling to participate.

9.2.2 Strengths

This study contributes to alerting stakeholders of challenges experienced by foundation phase learners with barriers to learning, in a rural area. It gives insight into the experiences of informants of the IE system, in a mainstream school in terms of learner development.

The information obtained is useful in terms of the situation in rural schools, no matter their quintile, as the fee-paying school also experienced similar, though fewer

challenges, when compared with the non-fee paying and Full-Service school. It also provides a clear picture of the possibilities and practical implementation of theories and policies in the inclusive system, on the ground level.

Although the study was conducted with a small sample of schools in the rural Sarah Baartman district, it is a diverse sample that includes a well-off school, a less affluent mainstream school and a Full-Service school, therefore covering the range of possible models of mainstream schools. It is believed that this research might apply to other rural areas with similar circumstances.

This study attempts to show the benefits of a networked system (Neal & Neal, 2013) to support DoE in working with children with barriers to learning. This will still not be a solution to all the challenges experienced, but such an approach might enhance a more holistic support system. Another strength of a networked approach might also lead to better internal and collaborative support systems. A trial of such an approach may be useful not only in rural areas but of benefit to education as a whole.

A networked approach from top-down as well as bottom-up seeks to provide a balance between theory and practice by reconstructing systems of power and promoting the provision of better communication between stakeholders. These could be important considerations since several studies (Engelbrecht & van Deventer, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018) highlight that there is a gap between theory and practice.

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

During the process of exploring the development of learners with barriers in their grade 1 year, I recognised other aspects that might be explored in future research to contribute and enhanced an IE system that caters for all learners' academic and developmental needs.

The school readiness of grade 1 learners in rural schools throughout the country: The reasons for learners not being school ready in rural areas partially derives from the possibilities of some of these learners not attending pre-school.

The study showed that some learners attending Grade R were also not fully ready for the demands of formal schooling, so perhaps a broader contextual study is necessary.

The possible adaptation of the Grade R and/or the Grade 1 curriculum: This research showed that many learners entering formal school were not ready for the demands of the current Grade 1 curriculum with its strict pacesetters. It also seems although some of the learners attended Grade R, the Grade R year did not fully prepare them for formal schooling.

The expected education level of grade R and pre-school educators to provide quality education: Educator participants reported a gap between the grade R scholastic outcomes and the demands of Grade 1. These educators believed that contributing to this, might be that pre-school educators do not recognise what is expected of a learner when entering formal school.

The impact of educators' stress levels on learner development in the foundation phase: Whilst the educators appeared to be sympathetic to the plight of learners with barriers, elevated stress seems to lead to feelings of guilt and consequent emotional distancing.

An interventionist research study on promoting supportive peer-group interactions for the foundation phase learner with a barrier to learning or disability: The research shows a diversity of findings of integration of LSEN and this needs further investigation in similar contexts to this study

Further research is also necessary, possibly using pilot studies, on collaborating in a more integrated Networked system, between all government departments, to the benefit of all learners in South Africa.

9.4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

Theory and policy in the inclusive system versus practice, experienced by educators and district officials, appear to contradict. Developmental needs of foundation phase learners with barriers to learning do not seem to be adequately met, while the educators experienced an increased workload and concerning high stress levels. Therefore, it appears that the inclusive system in itself seems to be a barrier to quality education for LSEN. The combination of factors in the inclusive system that hampers progress in the first formal year of schooling might be seen as the first step in predicting the outcome of school-leaving results, completing school and future career opportunities.

Most of the literature research I have engaged with investigated the school and educator's role in improving IE (Mc Connachie, 2013; Mahlo, 2017; Mokaleng & Mowes, 2020). Some researchers realised that theory and practice do not meet (Amstrong et al, 2011, Hornby, 2015, Wernich et al., 2018) and others considered decolonisation (Mahlo, 2017a; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Phalo et al., 2017; Walton, 2018) of IE.

As South Africans in a unique setup, with a wide range of ethnic groups and social standings, we need to reconsider the intention of initial motivations to influence society through the IE paradigm. Inclusion of all humans and IE started as an ideal to promote human rights, but for South Africans, there seems to be further motivation in the contexts of our social history and the legacy of inequalities of the apartheid system. It might well be that our motivation for the change was well-intentioned and necessary but that we have not thought the process through, to suit the unique circumstances and context of a diverse developing country. My conclusion is that in planning the process of equal education opportunities for all, we did not adequately deliver to the pupils that it was intended for. Instead, we adopted a first world system that appears to mainly cater for a privileged minority and fails to uplift the most vulnerable communities. Therefore, after 20 years in a system where the curriculum has changed several times, we can reason that the problem might not be in the curriculum only, but

in the way we have tried to adapt first world practices to fit in our context and framework.

To promote change, we need to put on a South African lens, considering our financial resources (Amnesty International, 2020) and stability as a country, within the limits of our development. This means that we need to create a system that will work not only for a minority but for all citizens of our country. To ensure service delivery in all systems and sections of education, we need to implement a networked system where the top-down structures work simultaneously with bottom-up structures, providing the means to support learners with barriers appropriately.

This research study attempted to provide a better understanding of the influences of the IE system on the development of learners. It is hoped that the contributions of this research study have:

- a) Provided insight into the practicalities and challenges of implementation on the ground level, to meet the developmental needs of learners with barriers to learning.
- b) Showed the need for adaptations in the theoretical framework to promote practice in the best interest of the individual child and all children.
- c) Provided ideas, including the possibility of a networked system, to meet the developmental needs of learners in their educational and social communities as a whole.

When looking at inclusion as a concept, it is unarguably the ideal for social acceptance and inclusion of all people in society. In a perfect world, where there are ample finances, resources, and empathy for others, this will be easy. The question remains whether it is achievable in this world, country, province, society, community and setting in which we find ourselves at this specific stage and moment in life? The answer will not be the same, but will depend on the country where one lives, with all its possible challenges. It will further depend on the micro-, meso-, exo- macro-, and chronosystems of the setting, community, and wider society where a person resides.

As an Educational Psychologist, working with learners with barriers to learning for more than 30 years, the universal acceptance that we are all unique, with unique

experiences according to our perceptions, in a unique setting that becomes our reality to shape the value of ourselves and self-esteem, has never changed. Therefore, the question cannot be: In general, what is best for all? But should be: what is best for this specific child? That will include each child feeling secure, being happy, and being emotionally, socially and physically compatible to the inclusive setting.

From my experience over many years working with educators and parents, the plea was and still is: “I want my child to be happy, to feel accepted, to have friends and to progress according to his or her ability”. The next question should then be: How to achieve that outcome in education? The answer lies not in a universal outcome for all, but an outcome for a specific child, with specific needs, in her or his circumstances.

It seems to me that inclusion can only be successful if the school has the means and can provide quality education according to individual needs, by achieving outcomes that adhere to the child’s individual human rights. When the child is happy and content and portrays this through his or her behaviour and progress, only then has education reached its goals. If not, there should be other options to choose from, without political or popular enforcement by the state of any ideology. I believe that only then can we honestly claim that we have served the best interest of the child.

It appears that liberalistic and conservative political viewpoints pervade through education, where both sides claim human rights. The liberalists view social rights as a collective above individual rights, while it seems that the more conservative view claims the right for every family and individual to choose for themselves, above society in general. Caution should be taken not to become a society where individuals have no say or choice, but all humans should rather strive to create a civil society, where there is a healthy balance between the individual and society, and where freedom of choice as a basic human right still remains.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES
Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zweelitsha • Eastern Cape
Private Bag X0032 • Bhishe • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 (0)40 608 4691/4773 • Fax: +27 (0)86 742 4942 • Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za

Enquiries: B Pamla

Email: babalwa.pamla@ecdoe.gov.za

Date: 12 June 2019

Mrs. Cornelia Van Vuuren

Private Bag X001

Grahamstown

6140

Dear Mrs. Van Vuuren

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A DOCTORAL RESEARCH: VIEWS OF THE JOURNEY OF GRADE ONE LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM – A MULTI-LEVEL SYSTEMIC INVESTIGATION

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.
2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research involving 31-36 participants from 3 schools of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:
 - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
 - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
 - c. you seek parents' consent for minors;
 - d. it is not going to interrupt educators' time and task;
 - e. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
 - f. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;
 - g. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, provided that an arrangement to do research at the school including getting inside a classroom has been arranged and agreed upon in writing with the Principal and the affected teacher;



- h. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;
 - i. your research will be limited to those institutions for which approval has been granted, should changes be effected written permission must be obtained from the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;
 - j. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis.
 - k. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary.
 - l. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation upon completion of your research.
 - m. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you.
 - n. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).
 - o. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation
3. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there not be compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE.
 4. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
 5. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Director, Ms. NY Kanjana on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email nelisa.kanjana@ecdoe.gov.za should you need any assistance.



NY KANJANA
DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY AND RESEARCH
FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION



APPENDIX B

17 July 2019

Cornelia van Vuuren

Review Reference: 2019-0355-408

Email: g18v8625@campus.ru.ac.za

Dear Cornelia van Vuuren

Re: Views of the journey of grade one learners

Principal Investigator: Prof. Jaqueline Akhurst

Collaborators: Mrs. Cornelia Van Vuuren ,

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) – Human Ethics (HE) sub-committee.

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on completion of the research.

The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely

Prof Joanna Dames

Chair: Human Ethics sub-committee, RUESC- HE

APPENDIX C



ACCESS LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Rhodes University
Drostdy Road,
Grahamstown,
6139

.....School
.....Local Municipality
Private Bag
.....

Date

Dear Ms/Mr (district director)

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Invitation to participate in research interviews and focus group

I am a registered PhD student in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University.
My supervisor is Prof. J Akhurst

The proposed topic of my research is ***Views of the journey of the grade one learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive education system: A multi-level systemic investigation.***

The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To assess if the grade one learners with barriers to learning can reach their

full potential in the inclusive system.

- (b) To make recommendations to the Department of Education on possible adaptations in the system that will be beneficial for our LSEN learners in the Eastern Cape.

I am hereby seeking your consent to participate in the research. Certain Primary Schools has been selected to participate in a research study in your district. The research will involve the Gr 1 educators, the principals, support district officials and a focus group of parents of the learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive system. The research will take the form of interviews and a focus group with the participants. All research will be conducted after hours and will not interfere with your programmes. You will not be forced and may participate willingly. All information obtained will be strictly confidential. The anonymity of participants will be protected, and they will not be subjected to any risks.

To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy of the research instruments which I intend to use in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

Enquiries: C v Vuuren: +27 46 603 3349* e-mail: coravanvuuren9@gmail.com *Cell; 082 4655914*

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a feedback

Your permission to participate in the research will be highly appreciated. You are welcome to contact me if any further information is needed.

Yours sincerely,

CM van Vuuren

APPENDIX D



ACCESS LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Rhodes University
Drostdy Road,
Grahamstown,
6139

.....School
.....Local Municipality
Private Bag
.....

Date

Dear Ms/Mr (principal)

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a registered PhD student in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University.
My supervisor is Prof. J Akhurst

The proposed topic of my research is ***Views of the journey of the grade one learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive education system: A multi-level systemic investigation.***

The objectives of the study are:

- (c) To assess if the grade one learners with barriers to learning can reach their full potential in the inclusive system.
- (d) To make recommendations to the Department of Education on possible

adaptations in the system that will be beneficial for our LSEN learners in the Eastern Cape.

I am hereby seeking your consent to undertake part of the research in your school as it is one of the Primary Schools that has been selected. The research will involve yourself and the Gr 1 educators.

The research will take the form of an interview with you, a questionnaire for the gr 1 educators and interviews with the participating educators. All research will be conducted after hours and will not interfere with your school programme.

Educators will not be forced and may participate willingly. All information obtained will be strictly confidential. The anonymity of participants will be protected, and they will not be subjected to any risks.

To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (c) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (d) A copy of the research instruments which I intend to use in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

Enquiries: C v Vuuren: +27 46 603 3349* e-mail: coravanvuuren9@gmail.com *Cell; 082 4655914*

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a feedback

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

CM van Vuuren

APPENDIX E



EDUCATOR PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

Grade 1 Educator

Project Title: Views of the journey of the gr 1 learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive education system: A multilevel systemic investigation.

Cora van Vuuren from the Department of Psychology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to assess if the learners with barriers to learning can reach their full potential in the inclusive system.
2. The researcher will not act in her capacity as a psychologist in the department, but solely as a student of the University of Rhodes.
3. The Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
4. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards making recommendations to the Department of Education on possible adaptations in the system that might be beneficial for learners with special education needs in the Eastern Cape. The expected values and benefits are to adapt the education

system to provide learners with barriers to learning quality education at all stages of their education in a dignified manner.

5. I will participate in the project by completing questionnaires, participate in a focus group discussion and interviews providing individual information on the progress and development of the selected learners with barriers to learning in my class.
6. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
7. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
8. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There is a slight risk of embarrassment to provide sensitive information on the questionnaire and in the focus group. There might be a risk of wanting. There might be a risk of feelings of guilt. There is also a risk that confidentiality might be compromised by other participants in the focus group.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The researcher will endeavour to minimise risks by using sound research methods and respect the dignity and right to privacy. The researcher will explain the importance of confidentiality to the focus group. If you feel uncomfortable or exposed at any time during the focus group, you may excuse yourself and request a private conversation with the researcher. The researcher's focus will be on your opinion on the functioning of the inclusive system, what is offered and what is needed.
 - c. there is a 50% chance of the risk materialising
9. The researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a PhD thesis, however, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
10. I will receive feedback in the form of a summary of findings and recommendations, available at the school regarding the results obtained during the study.

11. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research, or my participation will be answered by the researcher with cellphone number 0824655914 or email at coravanvuuren9@gmail.com.
12. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
13. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.
14. Request to take pictures, video and voice recording for this study

I, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....

Participants signature

Witness

Date

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethics

Ethics Coordinator: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727 f: +27 (0) 86 616 7707

Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139

APPENDIX F



DISTRICT OFFICIAL PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

District official

Project Title: Views of the journey of the gr 1 learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive education system: A multilevel systemic investigation.

Cora van Vuuren from the Department of Psychology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to assess if the learners with barriers to learning can reach their full potential in the inclusive system.
2. The researcher will not act in her capacity as a psychologist in the department, but solely as a student at the University of Rhodes.
3. The Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
4. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards making recommendations to the Department of Education on possible adaptations in the system that might be beneficial for learners with special education needs in the Eastern Cape. The expected values and benefits are to adapt the education system to provide learners with barriers to learning quality education at all

stages of their education in a dignified manner.

5. I will participate in the project by completing questionnaires, participate in a focus group discussion and an individual interview.
6. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
7. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
8. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There is a slight risk of embarrassment to provide sensitive information in the focus group. There might be a risk of wanting. There might be a risk of feelings of guilt. There is also a risk that confidentiality might be compromised by other participants in the focus group.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The researcher will endeavour to minimise risks by using sound research methods and respect the dignity and right to privacy. The researcher will explain the importance of confidentiality to the focus group. If you feel uncomfortable or exposed at any time during the focus group, you may excuse yourself and request a private conversation with the researcher. The researcher's focus will be in your opinion on the functioning of the inclusive system, what is offered and what is needed.
 - c. there is a 50% chance of the risk materialising researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a PhD thesis, however, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
- 8 I will receive feedback in the form of a summary of findings and recommendations, available at the school regarding the results obtained during the study.
- 9 Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by the researcher with cellphone number 0824655914 or email at coravanvuuren9@gmail.com.

- 10 By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
- 11 A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.
- 12 Request to take voice recording for this study

I, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....

Participants signature

Witness

Date

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethics

Ethics Coordinator: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727 f: +27 (0) 86 616 7707

Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139

APPENDIX G



PARENT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

Grade 1 Parent

Project Title: Views of the journey of the gr 1 learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive education system: A multilevel systemic investigation.

Cora van Vuuren from the Department of Psychology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to assess if the learners with barriers to learning can reach their full potential in the inclusive system.
2. The researcher will not act in her capacity as a psychologist in the department, but solely as a student of the University of Rhodes.
3. The Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
4. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards making recommendations to the Department of Education on possible adaptations in the system that might be beneficial for learners with special education needs in the Eastern Cape. The expected values and benefits are to adapt the education

system to provide learners with barriers to learning quality education at all stages of their education in a dignified manner.

5. I will participate in the project by participating in a focus group discussion.
6. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
7. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
8. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There is a slight risk of embarrassment to provide sensitive information on the questionnaire and in the focus group. There might be a risk of wanting. There might be a risk of feelings of guilt. There is also a risk that confidentiality might be compromised by other participants in the focus group.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The researcher will endeavour to minimise risks by using sound research methods and respect the dignity and right to privacy. The researcher will explain the importance of confidentiality to the focus group. If you feel uncomfortable or exposed at any time during the focus group, you may excuse yourself and request a private conversation with the researcher. The researcher's focus will be in your opinion on the functioning of the inclusive system, what is offered and what is needed.
 - c. there is a 50% chance of the risk materialising
9. The researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a PhD thesis, however, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
10. I will receive feedback in the form of a summary of findings and recommendations, available at the school regarding the results obtained during the study.
11. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by the researcher with cellphone number 0824655914 or email at coravanvuuren9@gmail.com.

- 12. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
- 13. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.
- 14. Request to take voice recording for this study

I, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....

Participants signature

Witness

Date

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethics
 Ethics Coordinator: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za
 t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727 f: +27 (0) 86 616 7707
 Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139

APPENDIX H



PARENT AND GUARDIAN'S INFORMED CONSENT: Child information to be used.

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Parent or Guardian)

Project Title: Views of the journey of the gr 1 learners with barriers to learning in the inclusive education system: A multilevel systemic investigation.

Cora van Vuuren from the Department of Psychology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to allow my child/ ward to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

1. I am aware that the researcher is conducting the research in her capacity as a student and not as a representative for the Department of Education.
2. I am aware that the purpose of the research project is to assess if the learners with barriers to learning can reach their full potential in the inclusive system.
3. The Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate. [2019-0355-408]
4. By participating in this research project my child/ward will be contributing towards making recommendations to the Department of Education on possible adaptations in the system that might be beneficial for learners with special education needs in the Eastern Cape. The expected values and benefits are to adapt the education system to provide learners with barriers to learning quality

education at all stages of their education in a dignified manner.

5. My child/ward will participate in the project by making his/her background information, clinic card, medical and/or other professional reports, learner profile or any other information reported by the educator available to the researcher. There will not be direct contact with my child.
6. My child's participation is entirely voluntary and if my child/ward is older than seven (7) years, s/he must also agree to participate.
7. Should I or my child/ward at any stage wish to withdraw my child from participating further, we may do so without any negative consequences.
8. My child may be asked to withdraw from the research before it has finished if the researcher or any other appropriate person feels it is in my child's best interests, or if my child does not follow instructions.
9. Neither my child nor I will be compensated for participating in the research.
10. There may be risks associated with my child's participation in the project. I am aware that the following risks are associated with participation:
 - a. There might be a slight risk of embarrassment if information leaks out that my child partakes in a research project where learners with barriers to learning are involved. There is a slight risk of embarrassment to provide sensitive information in a group. There is also a risk that confidentiality might be compromised by other participants in the focus group. I am aware, although not by the intention that I might feel offended by the claim that my child has a barrier to learning.
 - b. The researcher will endeavour to minimise risks by using sound research methods and respect the dignity and right to privacy. The researcher will explain the importance of confidentiality to the focus group. If you feel uncomfortable or exposed at any time during the focus group, you may excuse yourself and request a private conversation with the researcher. The researcher's focus will not be on the children or learning barriers, but rather my opinion on the functioning of the inclusive system, what is offered and what is needed.
 - c. There is a 50% chance of the risk materialising
11. The researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a PhD thesis, however, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my or my child's/ward's name and identity will not be revealed to anyone

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE ON LEARNER DEVELOPMENT

When completing this questionnaire, the class group and developmental stage according to age should be used as the norm. In other words, compare the learner to the average of the other learners in your class.

Learner: _____

FOUNDATION PHASE: GR 1				
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE		yes	no	Comments/Concerns
1	Does the learner have any visible physical challenges?			
2	Is the learner small compared to the group?			
3	Are there any facial features that concern you?			
4	Are you aware of any medical diagnosis of a syndrome?			
5	Does the learner look healthy and well cared for?			

6	General comments about physical concerns			
EMOTIONAL APPEARANCE		yes	no	Comments/Concerns
1	Does the learner seem happy?			
2	Does the learner seem to have self-confidence?			
3	Does the learner cry often?			
4	Are there any emotional outbursts?			
5	Do you think the learner has enough self-confidence to explore the environment?			
6	Is there evidence of any wetting or soiling of underwear?			
7	Does the learner seem on the same emotional level as the peer group?			

8	Are there signs of anxiety?			
9	General comments about emotional concerns			
SOCIAL		yes	no	Comments
1	Does the learner have friends?			
2	Are the friends in the same age group?			
3	Are the friends in a younger age group?			
4	Does the learner seem withdrawn from the group?			
5	Are there any social behaviour concerns?			

6	Is the learner being bullied?			
7	Does the learner fit in with his/her peer group?			
8	Do you think that the learner experiences the classroom as a safe space?			
9	Does the class group accept this learner?			
11	Is the learner able to share?			
12	Can the learner await his/her turn?			
13	General comments about social concerns			
SCHOLASTIC		yes	no	Comments
1	Does the learner know his/her address?			

2	Does the learner know his/her parents' telephone number?			
3	Does the learner know his/her date of birth?			
4	Can the learner tie his/her shoelaces?			
5	Can he/she draw basic shapes?			
6	Is the learner able to dress him/herself?			
7	Is the learner able to cross the midline?			
8	Does the learner participate in scholastic activities?			
9	Can he/she read and write at the expected level? If not, at what level is his/her reading and writing?			
10	Up to which point can the learner count?			
11	Is the learner progressing according to what you expect at this stage?			

12	Was the learner school ready according to his/her assessment?			
13	General comments about scholastic concerns:			
BEHAVIOUR		yes	no	Comments
1	Does the learner adhere to discipline?			
2	Does the learner follow basic rules?			
4	Is his/her behaviour age-appropriate?			
5	Does he/she bully other learners?			
6	Any concerns about learner's behaviour:			

APPENDIX J

EDUCATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

To be completed by the class educator

Please complete the questionnaire below

FOUNDATION PHASE: Gr 1 Class				
EDUCATOR INFORMATION				
1	Please state your qualifications.			
2	Years of Teaching Experience.			
3	Are you a qualified Foundation Phase educator?			
		yes	no	Comments/Concerns
4	Do you feel that you have received sufficient training to accommodate LSEN learners in your class?			
5	Do you feel adequately equipped to teach LSEN learners?			
6	Can you plan a general Individual Support Programme?			
7	Can you plan a barrier specific individual support programme?			

8	Do you have time to teach an individual support programme to all your learners with barriers to learning in your class?			
9	Do you have barrier specific knowledge or training, to accommodate the LSEN in your class?			
10	Do you feel that you get enough support from your District Office?			
11	Do you work according to the SIAS policy?			
CLASSROOM SETUP				Comments/Concerns
		Number		
1	How many learners do you have in your classroom?			
2	Diversity in the classroom: 1. Low socio-economic background 2. Learner with SEN 3. LoLT different from the home language			
3	How many learners with learning difficulties have you identified in your class			
4	How many of the identified learners are diagnosed by a professional?			
		Yes	No	
5	Do you have facilities available to confirm barriers to learning?			

6	Is there enough professional support available to assist you?			
7	Do you have any classroom assistants?			
8	Do you have any assistive devices in your classroom?			
9	If so, are these devices barrier specific?			
EDUCATOR WELLBEING				
	How will you describe your stress level on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not stressed at all and 5 is very stressed)			
	Reasons for experiencing stress in your classroom			
	Do you feel that you can cope with the demands expected from you?			
	Are you content with your situation in the classroom?			
	Would you choose another career if given a choice? Please explain your answer.			
	Any general comments concerning your wellbeing?			
RESOURCES/ NEEDS ANALYSIS				

1	Do you have enough human resources to cater for your learners with barriers to learning?			
2	Do you know what resources/equipment is needed to cater for barrier specific adaptation in your class?			
3	If you answered yes to the question above, do you have these resources in your classroom?			
GENERAL				
1	Do you think the top structure, Provincial and National, understand the needs of LSEN in a classroom?			
2	How have learners been affected in the inclusive education model?			
3	Do you feel that learners have experienced adequate physical, cognitive and emotional growth during the year, according to their abilities and the norm of the peer group?			
4	What, if any would you like to change to be able to educate all learners to reach their optimal potentials?			

APPENDIX K

PRE-DETERMINED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Focus Group, Educators

Introductory pleasantries to be conducted and a verbal confirmation to be given of the general purpose of the research, the role that the interview will play in the research, the approximate time required, and the fact that the information will be treated confidentially.

For your information, please note the following:

1. Participation in the interview is voluntary.
2. Participants are free to opt-out of the process at any time.
3. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for purposes of the study.
4. Audio recordings will be kept in a safe space and destroyed 5 years after the research has been finalised.
5. Your participation and contribution are highly valued.

Semi-structured questions for Educators' focus group interview

1. What is your opinion on your abilities and levels of training to assist learners with barriers to learning?
2. What are your thoughts about SIAS- identifying learners with barriers?
3. Please give your thoughts on the Three-Stream Policy.
4. What is your opinion of your training in different types of barriers to learning?
5. To what extent do you think one person can be an expert to deal with the various disabilities that may be encountered in learners?
6. Please describe your thoughts about the support you can render to learners with barriers to learning.
7. What resources do you have in the school?
8. What are your thoughts about the adequacy of resources?
9. What is your opinion on the SIAS process?

10. In what way does the system make provision to support learners after screening, identification, and assessment were done?
11. How do you feel the inclusive system in South Africa/ Eastern Cape treats learners with special educational needs? Would you describe this treatment as being dignified, according to their human rights?
12. What are your thoughts about learners with barriers to learning reaching their full potential in our mainstream schools?
13. What, if any, systemic changes would be advised to make the system more streamlined in the best interest of the child?
14. Are there any other issues or aspects of the inclusive education system that you think warrant discussion; and do you have any suggestions?

APPENDIX L



PRE-DETERMINED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PARENTS

Introductory pleasantries to be conducted and a verbal confirmation to be given once again of the general purpose of the research, the role that the interview will play in the research, the approximate time required, and that the information will be treated confidentially.

For your information, please note the following:

1. Participation in the interview is voluntary.
2. Participants are free to opt out of the process at any time.
3. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for purposes of the study.
4. Audio-recordings will be safely stored for 5 years.
5. Your participation and contribution are highly valued.

Semi-structured questions to guide parent focus group interview

1. How would you describe your child's relationship with the peer group in class?
2. What are your thoughts about the amount of support given to children in the classroom? What does inclusive mainstream schooling mean to you?
3. What are your thoughts about your child's school?
4. Do you have any comments about your child's educator, in relation to interactions with your child and others?

5. Please describe your child's responses to school. (Explore feelings expressed by the child, such as levels of happiness, any reluctance to attend, child's comments and so on)
6. What are your thoughts about the number of learners in the classroom?
7. What does the term "slow learner" mean to you? (Explore ideas about the child's coping in relation to stage of development)
8. Briefly explain the idea of inclusive education. What are your thoughts about the inclusive education model, and specifically your child's experience of this?
9. If parents have thoughts about the needs of their children for more specialized attention, what are their preferences for place of schooling? (Explore their ideas about staying in regular school or placement in a Special School that caters for specific needs)

APPENDIX M



PRE-DETERMINED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: DISTRICT OFFICIALS

Introductory pleasantries to be conducted and a verbal confirmation to be given of the general purpose of the research, the role that the interview will play in the research, the approximate time required, and the fact that the information will be treated confidentially.

For your information, please note the following:

1. Participation in the interview is voluntary.
2. Participants are free to opt out of the process at any time.
3. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for purposes of the study.
4. Audio-recordings will be kept in a safe space and destroyed 5 years after the research has been finalised.
5. Your participation and contribution is highly valued.

Semi-structured questions for District support officials' focus group interview

1. What is your opinion on the educator's abilities and levels of training to assist learners with barriers to learning?
2. What are your thoughts about educators identifying learners with barriers?
3. Please give your thoughts on the Three-Stream Policy.
4. What is your opinion of your training in different types of barriers to learning?

5. To what extent do you think it is possible for one person to be an expert to deal with the various disabilities that may be encountered in learners?
6. Please describe your thoughts about the support you can render to schools, educators, and learners with barriers to learning?
7. What resources do you have in the district?
8. What are your thoughts about the adequacy of resources?
9. What is your opinion on the SIAS process?
10. In what way DOEs the system make provision to support learners after screening, identification, and assessment were done?
11. How do you feel the inclusive system in South Africa/ Eastern Cape treats learners with special educational needs? Would you describe this treatment as being dignified, according to their human rights?
12. What are your thoughts about learners with barriers to learning reaching their full potential in our mainstream schools?
13. What, if any, systemic changes would be advised to make the system more streamlined in the best interest of the child?
14. Are there any other issues or aspects of the inclusive education system that you think warrant discussion; and do you have any suggestions?

APPENDIX N

Interview Schedule.

Participants	Scheduled interviews					
	School 1		School 2		School 3	
Principals						
Permission	2019-07-19		2019-07-23		2019-07-22	
Interview	2019-08-01		2019-08- 08		2019-08-15	
Educators						
1. Introductory interviews	2019-07-19		2019-07-23		2019-07-22	
2. Focus Group	2019-08-21		2019-08-21		2019-08-21	
3. Continued Individual interviews	2019-08-01		2019-08-08		2019-08-15	
	2019-08-22		2019-08-29		2019-09-05	
	2019-09-12		2019-09-19		2019-10-03	
	2019-11-14		2019-11-21		2019-11-28	
Parents						
Focus Group	2019-09-13		2019-09-20		2019-09-06	
District Officials						
Focus Group	2019-10-09					
Individual	S1	S2	S3	S4	T1	T2
	19/10/16	19/11/4	19/11/18	19/11/19	19/11/16	19/11/1

APPENDIX O

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EASTERN PROVINCE



LEARNER PROFILE

ADMISSION NUMBER

GRADE R - 12

complete in pencil

Learner's Profile should be completed annually by the REGISTER TEACHER
NO TIPPEX MAY BE USED

FOUNDATION PHASE PHOTO
(at the beginning of
the phase)

INTERMEDIATE PHASE PHOTO
(at the beginning of
the phase)

SENIOR PHASE PHOTO
(at the beginning of
the phase)

FET PHASE PHOTO
(at the beginning of
the phase)

PERSONAL INFORMATION:
(Please use a BLACK PEN and update when there is change)

SURNAME:

NAME:

GENDER:

ID NUMBER (BIRTH CERTIFICATE):

HOME LANGUAGE:

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY:

POSITION IN FAMILY
(indicate with X)

ONLY OR FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FORTH	FIFTH
CHILD	CHILD	CHILD	CHILD	CHILD

RELIGION:

SOCIAL GRANT NUMBER:

MEDICAL INFORMATION

(Please use a pencil and update when there is change)

FAMILY PRACTITIONER / CLINIC	
CONTACT NUMBER	
ALLERGIES (PLEASE USE A RED PEN)	
CHRONIC ILLNESS	
MEDICAL AID	
MEDICAL AID NUMBER	
NAME OF CARD HOLDER (MAIN MEMBER)	
CONTACT PERSON (OTHER THAN PARENTS OR GUARDIAN) IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY	
CONTACT NUMBER OF ABOVE - MENTIONED PERSON	

INFORMATION REGARDING PARENT/ OR GUARDIAN/S:

(Please use a pencil and update when there is change)

SURNAME & INITIALS			
IDENTITY NUMBER			
CONTACT DETAILS			
RELATIONSHIP			
SURNAME & INITIAL			
OCCUPATION			
MARITAL STATUS			
PHYSICAL ADDRESS			

