

**The Challenges Facing Parents and Teachers of Learners
with Intellectual Disabilities in the Transition from
Primary to High School in South Africa**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of teachers and parents of learners with intellectual disabilities as the learners' progress to high school. In so doing, an understanding of how they coped with characteristics unique to inclusive education and adolescence in South Africa was gained.

The study was conducted at a private school in an affluent suburb of Cape Town, South Africa. The participants comprised of parents, facilitators and teachers involved with the Special Education Unit for learners with intellectual disabilities, which is attached to the mainstream school.

A phenomenological research methodology was applied and was informed by narratives of the lived experiences of the participants. The data collection method took the form of semi-structured interviews with a subsequent inductive approach to the method of data analysis. The findings revealed the following themes: Positive experiences with inclusive education; Shortcomings of inclusive education experienced by the participants; Parent involvement in inclusive education; Challenges for learners; Positive experiences of facilitation; Shortcomings of facilitation; The effect on the family; Reflections and mixed emotions about the future; Parents frustrations; The home and school as partners; Positive relations and the way forward.

The results highlighted the importance of the further involvement of parents as a source of knowledge and their treatment as equal partners in the inclusion process at all levels. Recommendations regarding topics for further research included the following: the role of facilitators in the inclusive education of learners with intellectual disabilities; barriers to inclusive education specific to these learners; and exploring common core activities that promote the development of relationships between learners with intellectual disabilities and those without. A further recommendation involved making facilitators an integral part of the national education system and incorporated into policy regarding the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study the following definitions that have been used to describe disability, facilitators, intellectual disability as well as inclusive education which were derived from the social model of disability.

Disability:

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (World Health Organisation, 2007) mainstreams the experience of disability and recognises it as a universal human experience and highlights that it does not only occur to a minority of people. The ICF takes into account the social aspects of disability and does not see disability only as 'medical' or 'biological' dysfunction" (The World Bank, 2005: 1). The ICF includes Contextual Factors where environmental factors are listed, which records the impact of the environment on the person's functioning. The ICF is "an umbrella term incorporating impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions as a part of a broader classification scheme" (The World Bank, 2005: 1). Within the ICF people are not labeled as having a disability, which is based on a medical condition, rather are classified according to the in-depth description of their functioning within various domains.

A definition of disability as approved by the South African Cabinet in April 2005 states, "disability is the loss or elimination of opportunities to take part in the life of the community, equitably with others that is encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological or other impairments, which may be permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, thereby causing activity limitations and participation restriction with the mainstream society. These barriers may be due to economic, physical, social, attitudinal and/or cultural factors" (Lekgotla, 2005:3).

Facilitators

In this study the term facilitator will refer to a facilitator of pupils with special educational needs. These facilitators have a multifaceted role, "they learn specific communication skills and recognize the values, concerns, and personality types of others; function effectively as a collaborative team leader and a source of information

and support; learn strategies for supporting students to be full participants and learners within the general education curriculum and classroom” (Jorgenson, Schuh, and Nisbet, 2005:4).

Intellectual Disability

When the term intellectual disability was used in this study, it was referring to “people with intellectual disabilities who find it difficult to learn and retain new information, and often to adapt to new situations. Children with intellectual disabilities often develop slower than their peers and require additional support to develop. One example of intellectual disability is Down syndrome. Augmentative and Alternative and Alternative communication (AAC) strategies are essential communication tools for people with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, and include special communication boards, adapted computers etcetera” (Disabled People of South Africa, 2001: 23-24).

Inclusive Education

For the purpose of this study, the definition of Inclusive Education, which was taken from the National Department of Education's *Quality Education for All*, was chosen as best describing inclusive education from a social paradigm of disability. “...a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language” (Department of Education, 1998:52).

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the topic and title of the research. It illustrates the magnitude of the challenges facing parents and teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities in the transition from primary to high school in South Africa. The background information on the research, as well as the motivation for the study, is provided. The overall aims and objective of the research are outlined, as well as the methodology used. The expected contribution of this research to the body of knowledge is also discussed.

1.1 Background and Motivation for the Study

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an inclusive education and training system (Department of Education, 2001), has become the new vision and policy of South African Education. However, as a spin-off of the global attitude toward competitive economics, many schools are more concerned with academic and sporting achievements than catering for pupils with special educational needs. In the current South African context, most government schools cannot cope with the influx of pupils with special educational needs and inclusive education is regarded as a 'middle-class' option for families who can afford private schooling.

The main focus of the *Education White Paper 6* has been on integrating and supporting learners with special educational needs in primary schools in South Africa. However, John Daniel, the Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, stated that despite some exciting initiatives, current inclusive educational programmes fall short of meeting the needs of adolescents at risk of being marginalized. Moreover, programmes concerning such groups generally run outside of the mainstream and have focused predominantly on primary education. They have thus ignored secondary education (Daniel, 2003:4). This results in many pupils and parents who have been through the inclusion process at primary school level (with varying degrees of success) finding that they have to readdress obstacles to inclusive education at high school level. These obstacles are of a dual nature; some are familiar in terms of

attitudinal barriers and teachers' unwillingness as encountered at primary school, whereas others are new and appear specific to the high school 'experience.'

Even though the Department of Education published the *Education White Paper 6* in 2001, to date it has still not been legislated. Furthermore, it has only been rolled out in 30 pilot studies in South African primary schools. Owing to the slow delivery by government in the inclusive education arena, private schools have led the way in inclusive education; many of them now have established inclusion policies and practices in place (Christie, 1999: 163; Chambers, 1999:10)

Research has shown that all efforts concerning inclusive education must involve teachers and parents to be maximally effective. Also, home-school relationships have been viewed as an essential aspect of successful education for over three decades (Donald; Dawes & Louw, 2000:259, Duncan, 2003: 343, Hornby, 1999:152). It is for this reason that the researcher in this study decided to examine the lived experiences of parents and teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities in making the transition from a private primary to high school.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of parents and teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities in the transition from a private primary school to the secondary school. It was done in an attempt to understand the meaning they attached to these experiences with regards to achieving successful inclusive education for learners with special educational needs. A further purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of the facilitators on these learners in achieving successful inclusive education.

1.3 Research Questions

The specific research questions that related to this study were:

- What are the common issues connecting the experiences of parents and teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities?

- How do parents and teachers cope with these experiences?

1.4 Problem Statement

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the Department of Education introduced the *Education White Paper 6* in 2001 and has been slow to implement this policy. Since the introduction of this policy much research has been conducted regarding various aspects of inclusive education in South Africa. However, there has been a distinct lack of research concerning the experiences of parents and teachers with regard to learners with intellectual disabilities, specifically in the transition from primary school to secondary school. This lack of research makes it difficult to evaluate the success or failure of inclusive education in South Africa. It also leads to interventions that are not evidence-based. The researcher therefore felt that it was imperative to conduct research that would inform future interventions in the inclusive education of learners with intellectual disabilities.

1.5 Scope and Magnitude of the Problem

Introducing inclusive education practice into the secondary school scenario is extremely difficult. There is generally a tradition where teachers work in isolation within their particular discipline. This makes it exceptionally challenging for them to embrace the values of diversity and collaboration that underlies the culture of inclusive education. Furthermore, it is vital that principals of the schools 'buy in' to the bigger picture of inclusive education and continually reinforce this ethos amongst their staff (Bauer et al, 2001: not paged).

Teachers in turn require support from the larger authority by way of curriculum assessment, financial assistance and ongoing training to ensure the sustainability of inclusive education programmes. Strategies for these support systems are set out in the *Education White Paper 6* (Department of Education, 2001: 25). However, although the state has expanded its commitment to inclusive education programmes, it has not followed this through with a budget and capacity development strategy to

make these programmes sustainable (Wildeman and Nondo, 2007: 2). This has affected the ability of state schools to run effectively, to implement inclusive education programmes and to support parents of learners with special educational needs. The situation is exacerbated in poor communities where the struggle to survive is the main priority. This can result in learners with special educational needs being excluded from the education system. A major factor in this exclusion is often due to the non-recognition and non-involvement of their parents as noted in the *Education White Paper 6* (Department of Education, 2001: 17- 18).

With regard to enabling communities and teachers in particular, the *Education White Paper 6* proposes district support teams of professionals and therapists to actively support teachers at school level (Department of Education, 2001: 47). However, the establishment of these support teams is not yet a reality, leaving the teachers devoid of much-needed expertise (Wildeman and Nondo, 2007: 32).

1.6 Breakdown of Chapters in this Study

Chapter One introduces and orientates the study. It identifies the research questions, puts forward the problem statement, and highlights the scope and magnitude of the problem.

In Chapter Two of this study, the literature that has already been conducted in areas related to the research topic is examined. It begins by identifying the differences between the social and medical model views on disability and how this has a direct impact on how children with disabilities are educated. The following section provides a background to how the social view of disability resulted in both a global and South African shift to educate all learners in an inclusive educational setting. The focus then moves on to the experiences of learners with intellectual disabilities in high school with regard to the social and academic challenges they face in this scenario. This is followed by the roles of parents and teachers in inclusive education practices, and the importance of home-school relations. The chapter concludes with the role that research plays in inclusive education.

Chapter Three begins by examining the research design used in this study, namely qualitative research with an interpretive/constructivist view in line with a phenomenological research approach. It provides an explanation as to why this form of research has been used in this instance. This is followed by an explanation of the sample and sampling methods. The next section examines the methodology and the data collection tools that were used with particular emphasis on the pilot study and interview process. To conclude, the values of ethical considerations that were undertaken during the research process are outlined.

Chapter four describes the data analysis processes that were used in this phenomenological research as described by Giorgi (1975) and Creswell (1988). Thereafter the findings of the study are revealed. These are laid out according to the themes and categories that emerged during the data analysis process.

Chapter Five provides a discussion of the research findings. This chapter brought together the experiences of the participants expressed in the findings and put meaning to them. These meanings were then compared to the current body of pertinent literature, where applicable, which supported or disputed the findings.

Chapter Six provides recommendations and a short conclusion to the study. The recommendations responded to three key findings of the study. They revolved around the inclusion of parents as partners, the role of facilitators in the inclusion process and the social exclusion of the learners with intellectual disabilities.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, a critical examination of existing research and completed work that has previously been compiled that significantly relates to this current study is provided. This chapter begins by identifying the differences between the social and medical model views on disability, and how this has a direct impact on how children with disabilities are educated. The following section provides a background to how the social view of disability resulted in both a global and South African shift to educate all learners in an inclusive educational setting. The focus then moves on to the experiences of learners with disabilities in high school with regard to the social and academic challenges they face in this scenario. This is followed by the roles of parents and teachers in inclusive education practices, and the importance of home-school relations. The chapter concludes with the role that research plays in inclusive education.

2.1 The Development of the Medical Model Versus the Social Model of Disability

To appreciate the 'roots' and formation of the social model of disability it is important to have an understanding of the traditional medical model which has excluded and discriminated against people with disabilities in a society and focuses around and benefits 'normal', able-bodied people.

The medical model of disability focuses on what the person with a disability is unable to achieve and views disability "as a 'personal tragedy', which limits the capacity of the disabled person to participate in the mainstream of society" (UNESCO, 2002: 21). From this view it becomes the responsibility of the person with the disability to 'adapt to' and 'fit into' the world. Those locating themselves within the medical model of disability are generally non-disabled people who see those without disabilities as being the norm, and who believe that people differing from the norm have a deficit that needs to be fixed or corrected. If the 'problem' cannot be fixed and made 'normal' then the 'problem' needs to be removed from society. This has resulted in children with disabilities being institutionalised or sent to separate educational

streams. In developing countries such as South Africa the majority of children with disabilities have been completely excluded from the educational system. Furthermore, the medical model has developed a cultural system of exclusion, which alienates and excludes people with disabilities from society - examples of this include a transport system that is completely inaccessible, and buildings that cannot be accessed for people with mobility disabilities. The focus within the medical model is on rehabilitating or 'fixing' people with disabilities so that they are able to fit into the non-disabled world. The dependency created by the medical model disempowers people with disabilities and "isolates them from the mainstream of society, preventing them from accessing fundamental social, political and economic rights" (Office of the Deputy President, 1997: 9). The medical model has an enormous influence on society and the decisions it makes concerning people with disabilities. To a large degree it acts as a 'gatekeeper' for society; as it determines who has what 'wrong' with them, and to what degree this 'wrongness' will affect their participatory role in society. This has a dual affect of oppression of the person with a disability. Firstly, it sends a clear message to him or her as to what their 'place' in society is, and what they can and cannot expect in the life. Secondly, it informs society how to 'cater' for that person according to their medical condition. In addition, the "hierarchical relationship itself perpetuates passivity, ignorance and inhibits participation in every aspect of their lives" (Disabled People of South Africa, 2000: 6).

Shakespeare puts forward that the disabled have become "dustbins of disavowal" in society (Shakespeare in Marks, 1999: 22). What he means is that non-disabled people take their fears and anxieties that they have subconsciously put aside or 'disavowed' and then dump these fears onto disabled people. It is essentially a release mechanism where a non-disabled person, by placing their feelings of fallibility and insecurity onto the disabled, can make themselves feel better and reinforce their own sense of safety. In this process, disability becomes the problem of the disabled person. This aligns with the medical model, which individualises disability by locating it within the person with a disability. Extending from that, we live in a society constantly striving for perfection and independence. Thus, society at large puts all its feeling of imperfection and dependence on those seen to be imperfect and dependant, namely, people with disabilities. As we age, this view is constantly reinforced through societal channels of information such as the media, cultural values, faith and

education. This leads to discrimination of anyone who doesn't comply to, or aspires toward, these given norms. As mentioned above, those viewing disability from the medical model see it as a deficit and use terminology such as impairment and handicap. An example of this is the World Health Organisation's 1984 definition "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or with the range considered normal for a human being" (World Health Organisation as quoted in United Nations, 1984: 2).

In contrast to the medical model, the social model of disability was developed out of the Human Rights movement, where all people are seen as being equal citizens enjoying the same rights and opportunities for participation in society. Within this paradigm, the focus of disability shifts from that of "the 'personal tragedy' of the individual towards the way in which the social environment within which the disabled have to live acts to exclude them from full participation" (UNESCO, 2002: 21). Under the social model, disability has been constructed by society and is the product of the physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers, which lead to discrimination. The social model of disability "requires substantial changes to the physical environment. The goal must be the right of people with disabilities to play a full, participatory role in society" (Office of the Deputy President, 1997: 1). The social model of disability "is based on the belief that the circumstances of people with disabilities and the discrimination they face are socially created phenomena" (Office of the Deputy President, 1997: 11) and has little to do with the impairments of people with disabilities. "It is now generally accepted around the globe that disability is a social construct and most of its effects are inflicted on people by the social environment" (South African Human Rights Commission, 2002: 11).

In order to align with the social model of disability, the World Health Organisation's latest definitions of disability move away from medical definitions and focus on disability from a social view, having become a universal tool transcending disability beyond the impairment, but the environmental factors. *The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)* (World Health Organisation, 2007) mainstreams the experience of disability and recognises it as a universal human experience and highlights that it does not only occur to a minority of people. The ICF takes into account the social aspects of disability and does not see

disability only as 'medical' or 'biological' dysfunction" (The World Bank, 2005: 1). The ICF includes Contextual Factors where environmental factors are listed, which records the impact of the environment on the person's functioning. The ICF is "an umbrella term incorporating impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions as a part of a broader classification scheme" (The World Bank, 2005: 1). Within the ICF people are not labeled as having a disability, which is based on a medical condition, rather are classified according to the in-depth description of their functioning within various domains.

A definition of disability as approved by the South African Cabinet in April 2005 states, "disability is the loss or elimination of opportunities to take part in the life of the community, equitably with others that is encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological or other impairments, which may be permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, thereby causing activity limitations and participation restriction with the mainstream society. These barriers may be due to economic, physical, social, attitudinal and/or cultural factors" (Lekgotla, 2005:3).

From the social model point of view disability is not seen as a progression of nature, but rather as a construction of society, which is a barrier to the person with the disability. Thus 'disability' is seen as a form of oppression (Abberly, 1996: 63). The statement above reiterates the underlying strength of the social model, highlighting that the way to eradicate disability is to change the social and physical environment so that the needs and rights of people with disabilities are accommodated, instead of forcing them to adapt to the existing environment.

There are, however, shortcomings of the social model. The social model puts great emphasis on being functional, for example being employed and a taxpayer. This in turn discriminates against people who are not able to work regular hours or even work at all, for example, someone with chronic fatigue syndrome and those with cognitive impairments who are unable to fully function in accordance with 'societal norms'. Such persons would argue that they still have as much right to access of benefits, be it financial or professional, even though they are unable to work.

Definitions of disability that are based on the socio-cultural model include: “Disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream activity”(British Council of Organisations of Disabled People, 2002: 2). The South African Human Rights Commission defines a person with a disability as being

“...limited in one or more functional activities. This may be in seeing, hearing, communicating, moving, learning or other intellectual and emotional activities. The impairment may be permanent, recurring or transitory. It may be sensory, physical, cognitive or psychological. However, people who have very different impairments experience similar barriers and discrimination in society. The extent and experience of disability is, to a large extent, determined by how much the person’s environment prevents that individual from taking part in community life on an equal level with others. Disability is imposed by society when a person with an impairment is denied access to full economic and social participation. Society fails, physically or culturally, to accommodate the rights and needs of individuals with impairments” (South African Human Rights Commission, 2002: 10).

To conclude, history shows us how, through time, people with disabilities have been the source of ridicule, loathing, abuse and amusement. The argument is open as to how far things have improved but the fact is that today, people with disabilities do not hold an equal standing in society and remain an oppressed minority.

2.2 Inclusive Education in the Global Context

The Human Rights movement of the 1960’s and the formulation and adoption of the United Nations *Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities of Disabled People* (2004) served as recognition of the discrimination faced by persons with disabilities and resulted in all people being seen as having equal rights and status in society and this does not exclude people with disabilities. This shift has had a ripple effect on education systems resulting in a move to include all children regardless of disability into one inclusive educational stream. The *Salamanca Statement* of the

UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (June 1994) asserts that inclusion is a universal right that links to an inclusive society. It provides guidelines for including all learners with special educational needs into regular classrooms alongside their 'able-bodied' peers regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. "Schools should accommodate **all children** regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups" (UNESCO, 2003: 4).

Inclusive education is seen as a pedagogical approach that recognizes each child to be a unique learner and requires ordinary schools to be capable of educating all children in their community. Inclusive education draws on the social model in understanding educational difficulties and barriers, and suggests that the difficulties learners experience cannot be simply explained in terms of the learner's impairments, rather "it is the features of the education system itself" (UNESCO, 2002: 22). The attention shifts from the 'personal tragedy of the individual' towards the way in which social environments act to exclude individuals from full participation in society (Abberley, 1996: 63 and Magrab, 2003: 7). Magrab proposes that learners experience difficulties in the educational system "because of the barriers to learning implicit in the system, not because of their individual impairments. Inclusive education is about removing barriers and increasing educational opportunities" (Magrab, 2003: 7). At the core of inclusive education is the basic human right to education, pronounced in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1949). Article 2 of the *Convention on the Right of the Child* (United Nations, 1989) states that no child may be discriminated against, and makes special mention of disability, "Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, **disability**, birth or other status" (United Nations, 1989, Article 2.1). This *Convention* further states that parties should recognise that children with disabilities "should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active

participation in the community” (United Nations, 1989, Article 23.3). A logical consequence of this right is that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate on grounds of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, capabilities, and so on. While there are also very important human, economic, social and political reasons for pursuing a policy and approach of inclusive education, it is also a means of bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations. The *Convention* states that children with disabilities have the same rights including the right to special care. The *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (1994) asserts that: “Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO, 2003: 4). In addition research has shown that children with disabilities educated along side classmates without disabilities obtain higher academic results compared to those children in separate special educational streams (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994: 34).

In the developed countries of the world “the priority has been breaking down the system of segregation as it relates to education provision. In less-developed countries, the priority has tended to consist of including a range of marginalised groups in basic education” (UNESCO, 2003: 26). In some countries there may still exist policies that give a possibility for authorities to declare that some children are ‘uneducable’. Usually this practice applies to children with severe intellectual disabilities. These children may be taken care of but not necessarily provided with educational opportunities. In some countries, the education of specific groups of learners might be the responsibility of an authority other than the Ministry of Education. Very often this leads to a situation where these learners are not expected to participate in mainstream education provision and, subsequently, they do not have equal opportunities for further education or employment (UNESCO, 2003: 14). In developed countries of the North the move towards more inclusive approaches in education is often difficult due to the legacy of traditional policies and practices. For example segregated or exclusive education for groups identified as being ‘difficult’ or ‘different’, or based on wealth or religion. This influences the attitudes and mind-sets of people creating resistance towards change. In developing countries the major constraint is the serious shortage of resources – lack of schools or inadequate facilities, lack of teachers and/or shortage

of qualified staff, lack of learning materials and absence of support. There is also a serious concern about the quality of education. Although many countries have made recommendable progress towards achieving the goal of Education for All, this has come through sacrificing the quality. This is not a particular challenge to adopting more inclusive approaches in education but a challenge to education as a whole (UNESCO, 2003: 13).

To conclude inclusive education is not simply about reforming special education, and an inclusive school is not simply one that includes and educates some disabled learners. Rather, inclusive education is about reducing all types of barriers to learning and developing ordinary schools, which are capable of meeting the needs of all learners. It is, indeed, part of a wider movement towards a more just society for all citizens (UNESCO, 2002: 22).

The rationale for the ideological belief is that an inclusive education system serves as “the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all, moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994: ix).

2.3 Inclusive Education in the South African Context

Inclusive education emerged out of the transformation of an era of discrimination of people under the apartheid system based on, inter alia, race, gender and disability. *The Constitution* (Act 108 of 1996) founded South Africa’s democracy on the values of “human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms” (Government of South Africa, 1996: Section 1a). These values encourage “all citizens to take up the responsibility and challenge of building a humane and caring society, not for the few, but for all South Africans” (Department of Education 2001: 11). With all people being seen as equal citizens “every child has the fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning” (Department of Education, 1994: viii).

In 1996, the National Department of Education published *The South African Schools Act* of 1996 which states that public schools must provide the relevant support services for children with special education needs where reasonably possible. Public schools are required by law “where reasonably practicable, provide education for learners with special education needs at ordinary public schools and provide relevant educational support services for such learners” (Department of Education, 1996:34). In addition public schools need to “take all reasonable measures to ensure that the physical facilities at public schools are accessible to disabled persons” (Department of Education, 1996: 34).

In November 1997 the South African Government adopted the White Paper on *Integrated National Disability Strategy* (INDS), which is premised on the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) and based on the social model of disability. This Paper represents the government’s thinking, “on what it can contribute to the development of disabled people and to the promotion and protection of their rights” (National Government, 1997: Foreword). It can be seen as the South African Government’s official policy framework for disability equity. The aim of this document was to ensure that government departments make their policies, procedures, practices and programmes disability integrative and inclusive. It provides key findings and recommendations and aims to:

change attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards people with disabilities, thus creating a work environment in which disability issues and the needs of people with disabilities are fully integrated as matter of cause, not as an after thought or special favour (Research Dynamics South Africa, 2000: ii)

This Strategy guides all governmental departments to include disability in their line functions, including the National Department of Education.

Inclusive education in South Africa has been seen “as an essential precondition of bringing about quality education for all; this is important in order to avoid the danger of seeing inclusion as something that does not concern the majority of the population. The inclusion movement can call upon values, energies and momentum which underpins this political and social restructuring” (UNESCO, 2003: 27). In order for a segregated education system to transform into one that meets the needs of all South

Africans the *Bill of Rights* in the *South African Constitution* was created. This *Bill* states, “that everyone has the right to a basic education” (Constitution, 1996, Section 29 (1)), “which commits the state to the achievement of equality” (Constitution, 1996, Section 9 (2) and “which commits the state to non-discrimination” (Constitution, 1996, Section 9 (3) (4) (5)), and this does not exclude children with disabilities. In the past only a small percentage of children with disabilities were accommodated in separate ‘special’ educational stream that was racially segregated. Moreover, the education they received was inferior. The majority of special schools did not provide these children with education after primary school and did not meet their individual needs. Furthermore, the majority of children with disabilities were completely excluded from the educational system in South Africa and no support was provided for them to be integrated into society. Children “who have historically faced barriers to learning have had few opportunities for further education at the tertiary level” (UNESCO, 2003: 10). The Department of Education’s *Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education* (2002), identifies other indicators for factors impacting learning environments as being caused by: “Socio-economic situation, attitudes to difference, culture of the school, curriculum/learning programmes, communication, accessibility and safety of built environment, support from school/district, parental involvement, capacity amongst teachers, capacity amongst senior management, general dysfunctionality of school, assistive devices, availability of learning support materials/resources and violence/abuse” (Department of Education, 2002: 84).

In the year 2000 the South African Department of Education compiled the *Draft White Paper on Special Needs*, which resulted in the *Education White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (Department of Education, 2001). This revised White Paper resulted in an inclusive policy in the education of all learners in South Africa being adopted. Professor Kader Asmal, the past Minister of Education, stated that this education *White Paper* can be seen as, “another post-apartheid landmark policy paper that cuts our ties with the past and recognises the vital contribution that our people with disabilities are making and must continue to make, but as part of and not isolated from the flowering of our nation” (Department of Education, 2001: 4). A major influence in bringing this vision and policy into practice has been the parents of children with special educational needs (personal

communication with Colleen Howell of the Education Policy Unit, University of the Western Cape, 8 July 2003). The policy of inclusive education was popularised and legitimised by the fact that it was produced with strong influence from parents and organisations concerned with inclusive education. This is identified by Maharaj as a consequential prerequisite, which occurs when the preferences of all the interested parties have been provided for (Maharaj in Lazarus, 1997: 3).

The Department of Education identifies in *White Paper 6* that there are a broad range of learning needs amongst all learners, known as 'special education needs' or 'learning barriers'. These needs arise from intrinsic factors such as physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psychosocial disturbances, variations of intellectual ability, and particular life experiences or socio-economic deprivation. It further mentions that different learning needs may also arise due to the following extrinsic factors: negative attitudes to and stereotyping of differences, an inflexible curriculum that is not sensitive to all learners needs, inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching and inappropriate communication, inaccessible and unsafe built environments, inappropriate and inadequate support services, inadequate policies and legislation and the non-recognition and non-involvement of parents as wells as inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and teachers (Department of Education, 2001: 17-18).

The importance of the *Education White Paper 6* is that it transforms and moves on from the type of policy, which was so prevalent in the period of 1994 - 1999. The policies of this era were predominantly symbolic in nature as the new democratic government broke away from the secular policy of the apartheid government. Policies of this period were "about establishing the ideological and political credentials of the new government" (Jansen, 2002: 200) and thus the state was chiefly concerned about "settling policy struggles in the political domain rather than in the realm of practice" (Jansen, 2002: 200).

In the South African context, while the *Education White Paper 6* expresses a paradigm shift in South African education, Christie (1999) argues that "the national department's policy documents are idealistic texts in an essentially top-down policy process that is not rooted in the realities of schools, or responsive to conditions on the

ground” (Christie, 1999: 163). Furthermore, shifts within the popular conception of education as an aspect of the global market economy has positioned parents as consumers, teachers as producers and pupils as products (McNamara et al, 2000: 474; and Duncan, 2003: 343). Subsequently, “all have become ‘equal partners’ in the business of education” (McNamara et al, 2000: 474).

In addition, the *Education White Paper 6* makes the link to the social model of disability as it distinguishes between inclusive education and mainstreaming. This is relevant because “inclusive education refers to a change in the education system to accommodate all learners whereas mainstreaming refers to the ‘fitting in’ of children with disabilities into a pre-existing educational system: (Department of Education, 2000: 7). However, as a spin-off to the global attitude toward competitive economics, schools are more concerned with academic and sporting achievements than catering for pupils with special educational needs (McNamara et al, 2000: 474, Duncan, 2003: 343). In the current South African context, most government schools find themselves unable to cope with the ensuing influx of pupils with special educational needs and inclusive education is regarded solely as a ‘middle-class’ option for families who can afford private schooling (Chambers, 1999: 163; Christie, 1999: 164; and McKinney, 2003: 4). It is crucial that all teachers and managers receive appropriate training. “The primary demands of an inclusive system will necessitate a major focus, at least initially, on the training, re-training and re-orientation of all personnel” (Department of Education, 2002: 14). The implementation of inclusion education is far behind schedule which results in many children with disabilities still obtaining an inferior level of education in segregated educational settings, while those in mainstream, full service schools are often excluded due to lack of teacher training, resources, knowledge and support. There is also “an urgent need to address the organisational structure; there is confusion and overlapping between the notion of inclusive education and special needs education -- it would be more effective if the former had been regarded as higher status similar to outcomes-based education” (Wildeman, 2007: 32). For the first time since the introduction of the *Education White Paper 6* in 2001, the Department of Education began to roll out training and the implementation of inclusive education in a few pilot schools in each province in 2006.

2.4 Inclusive Education and Adolescence: The High School Experience

Secondary schools provide several 'paths of instruction' by way of programmes of study and are intended to educate learners and "prepare them for the adult world" (Dukes and Lamar-Dukes, 2006: not paged). Upon leaving high school many students may advance to tertiary academic courses, while others may take remedial courses to help improve coping with their learning difficulties. Thus, secondary schooling represents a crucial phase in the life of an adolescent. It holds those all-important moments, which will impact upon the decisions, they make regarding their life and careers, which "determine their future" (Daniel, 2003: 4).

In line with the above, many learners and parents who have been through the inclusion process at primary school level with varying degrees of success are now finding that they have to re-address obstacles to inclusive education at high school level. These obstacles are of a dual nature; some are familiar in terms of attitudinal barriers and teachers' unwillingness towards inclusive education as experienced at primary school level whereas others are new and appear specific to the high school experience (Christie, 1999: 163; Magrab, 2003: not paged).

Traditionally high school curricula has had a strong focus on academic content along with expectations that learners will be able to partake in the academic tasks. This created pressure on high schools and their learners to perform has had an adverse effect to the development of programmes for learners with disabilities and special educational needs. Subsequently, many students with disabilities, including those with learning and behavioural difficulties are being denied access to these paths of instruction at high school. Furthermore, catering for these learners has exposed the need for different and more functional approaches to their education; approaches that extend "beyond academics and into the social and work skills arena" (Dukes and Lamar-Dukes, 2006: not paged).

2.5 Social and Academic Challenges Concerning Learners with Intellectual Disabilities

Secondary schooling sets the stage for adolescents to develop their social and emotional competence for entrance into the adult world. More specifically, learners will discover how to deal with conflict, take responsibility for their actions and personal safety, learn to respect the space of others and generally learn to “appreciate social norms” (Elias in Taylor and Larson, 1999: 331). There are three aspects to this development: emotional, cognitive and behavioural. The emotional aspect deals with expression and management of feelings. The cognitive domain revolves around adopting roles, problem solving and cooperating. Finally, the behavioural component concentrates on the interpersonal skills needed for social interaction (Elias in Taylor and Larson, 1999: 331). Generally, adolescents show unique steps in emotional development in terms of making friends, self-reflection and developing social skills. Typically, they will develop opposite sex relationships, resist the authority of parents and teachers, and use their peer groups as a frame of reference for developing behavioural patterns. To achieve this, they generally engage in role taking, solving problem and moral dilemmas and embrace issues of their time and develop “insight from many aspects of a topic” (Manning in Taylor and Larson, 1999: 331).

With regard to this developmental process in the school environment learners with disabilities will experience unintentional and intentional attitudinal barriers. Unintentional attitudinal barriers generally refer to ignorance, lack of understanding or effort on behalf of the school system or teachers. Intentional attitudinal barriers involve learners with disabilities being isolated, physically abused or emotionally abused, with the latter being the most common. Attitudinal barriers have been the most detrimental to the social and academic development of learners with disabilities (Pavri and Luftig, 2000: 8; Pivik, McComas and Laflamme, 2002: 102). Physical or practical barriers have also been identified. These refer to the day-to-day challenges associated with the condition of the learners’ disability. Examples of these are requiring personal facilitators, moving around in the school environment and needing extra time to eat at lunch-break or complete schoolwork. The understanding of the staff of these physical barriers is “just as important as an understanding of the condition of the learners’ disability” (Pivik, McComas and Laflamme, 2002: 102).

With regard to learners with intellectual disabilities the cognitive domain reveals both social and academic challenge. Learners with intellectual disabilities “may find it difficult to learn and retain new information, and often to adapt to new situations. Children with intellectual disabilities often develop slower than their peers and require additional support to develop” (Disabled People of South Africa, 2000: 10). Cognitive emotional development relates to adolescents progressing from concrete and abstract thinking as well as expanding their “moral and ethical reasoning abilities” (Manning in Taylor et al, 1999: 331). However, those with intellectual disabilities struggle with both cognitive functioning and the ability to function in society (Taylor, 2000: 331; DPSA, 2000: 22-23). The American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR - the medically based term still used in the United States) also places emphasis on the strength and amount of support the learner may need to function in society (Taylor, 2000: 331). This underlines the need for creating strong support systems and mechanisms that will facilitate effective interaction in a school environment. The fundamental question arises as to what common-core social activities need to be utilized to promote the development of relationships between learners with disabilities and those who are non-disabled (Dukes and Lamar-Dukes, 2006: 9; Ainscow, 2001: 3-4).

The philosophy of inclusive education is in line with the social model of disability. However, one of the shortcomings of the social model is that people with learning disabilities often feel discriminated against within the disability sector. Many people with physical disabilities do not want to be identified with those who have intellectual disabilities as it carries a stigma of being ‘thick’ or ‘stupid’. This is perhaps to a large extent due to the fact that the initial driving force for disability rights has come from organisations pertaining only to physical disabilities (McKinney, 2003: 4). Therefore dealing with intellectual disabilities in inclusive education represents an additional challenge.

Those advocating for learners with milder forms of intellectual disabilities to be mainstreamed, are doing so in order to increase their opportunities to develop social competence and friendships with learners without disabilities, as well as to address academic goals (Fuchs and Fuchs in Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy and Widaman, 1998:

279). These people believe that the needs of learners with milder forms of intellectual disabilities will be best met in an inclusive educational setting as long as they have the support that is needed. “Their goals can best be met through the availability of specialised programmes and services that may be offered outside of the general classroom,” (Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy and Widaman, 1998: 279).

2.6 The Role of Parents of Learners with Disabilities in Inclusive Education

Historically, parents of learners with special educational needs had been the ‘driving force’ behind the formulation and service delivery of inclusive education processes and practices (Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy and Widaman, 1998: 273). Subsequently the “importance of parental involvement has been legitimated for many years” (Wolfendale, 1999: 1). This is because apart from the learners themselves, “parents are arguably the most affected by the move towards inclusive education” (Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy and Widaman, 1998: 273).

Parents need to feel “that they are valued and their efforts are not being undermined” (Department of Education, 2002: 57). Schools have an important role with regards to promoting positive interactions between parents and teachers as well as support, in order that parents “acquire better understanding of their child’s potential and progress” (Department of Education, 2002: 57). A positive relationship between parents of learners with disabilities and their teachers is needed in order to make the important link between school and home. “Caregivers and extended families are integral to the functioning of a full-service school in terms of fully making use the knowledge and skills of families” (Department of Education, 2002: 57).

While ongoing involvement of parents is imperative to the success of inclusive education, research and evaluation of this process play a vital role in redressing inclusion worldwide (Hornby, 1999: 152; McNamara et al, 2000: 474; Wolfendale, 1999: 1). It is crucial that parents be given accurate information so that they are given the power to make the best choice of the most suitable educational placement for their child. These placements need to be made on an individual basis with the learner at the centre of the decision. Where will the learners’ individual needs best be met? Would

these needs be best met in a mainstream/full service school with support, or in a separate special school? In the past decisions on placement have “not been made on a case-by-case basis. Often parents have been forced to accept segregated special education services or nothing and have not been presented with a range of options” (Sapon-Shevin, 2001: 37). The *Education White Paper 6* identifies three levels of support needed for learners with disabilities and provides options for educational placement according to these levels. These levels are low, moderate and high levels of support. To avoid learners with disabilities being classified according to their disability and subsequently ‘dumped’ in separate special schools, there needs to be a full assessment and provisions made according to “the intensity of support needed” (Department of Education, 2001: 10). Learners requiring a low level of support may attend regular schools, while those requiring a moderate level of support may attend a full-service school. The *Education White Paper 6* clearly states that “it is clear that some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support to be able to develop to their full potential” (Department of Education, 2001: 16).

In the current climate of inclusive education in South Africa where the delivery proposed in the *Education White Paper 6* has been slow (Christie, 1999: 163), research has shown that parents putting their child through the inclusive process have not chosen the easy option of special schools with regard to the specific professional services, such as speech therapy, available there. Instead, parents supportive of inclusive education generally regard it as a ‘life philosophy’ in line with the social model of disability (Chambers, 1999: 163; Duncan, 2003: 343; McKinney, 2003: 4).

2.7 The Role of Teachers of Learners with Disabilities in Inclusive Education

In order for learners with special needs to be fully included in inclusive educational settings there needs to be a partnership and collaboration between parents of learners, teachers and administrators. Teachers and administrators including principals and support staff need to show “great leadership in designing creative solutions to the problems inherent within pullout programs and remedial education” (Sapon-Shevin, 2001: 37). Crucial to this process is ‘buy-in’ from teachers. They have to understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as transform the way they have previously

taught in order to accommodate all learners in their class. The “limits of special education have been removed by those educators who have formally redefined their roles and responsibilities as dictated by the traditional duties associated with general and special education teachers”(Dukes and Dukes-Lamar, 2006: not paged). Teachers need to understand the strengths and needs of each learner and teach accordingly. Teachers also need to evaluate their current teaching methods and strategies in order to create “the conditions that can foster the growth of more inclusive practices” (Ainscow, 2001: 3). In order for teachers and managers to support each other as well as their learners they will need “new skills in curriculum differentiation, curriculum assessment, assessment of potential, collaborative teaching and learning, collaborative planning and sharing, reflection on practices and co-operation” (Department of Education, 2002: 65). Many teachers are under increasing pressure to assist learners in obtaining good academic results and often ignore the crucial social and emotional factors of development. “Traditional school cultures, supported by rigid organisational arrangements, teacher isolation and high levels of specialisms amongst staff who are geared to predetermined tasks, are often in trouble when faced with unexpected circumstances” (Ainscow, 2001: 4).

In order to transform existing ‘regular’ schools into full service schools where all learners are full participatory members of the school community there needs to be collaboration and sharing between the full service school and the remaining special schools. Exchanging of ideas, skills and knowledge sharing and discussing common problems needs to occur. There need to be established interactions “between mainstream and Special Schools as Resource Centres as a condition of employment of teachers” (Department of Education, 2002: 26). These interactions will assist in “bringing down the barriers previously experienced between special education and mainstream system and bring special education out of its isolation into the mainstream of education” (Department of Education, 2002: 26).

2.8 The Value of Home-School Relations

It is vital that there is “responsible inclusion where agreed philosophy and policy on inclusive education is developed to provide guidance to teachers, parents and others in

order to make inclusion successful; as opposed to imposed policy on schools without the opportunity for discussion” (Hornby, 1999: 152). Many learners with special needs who have been placed into a mainstream school from a special school remain relatively isolated depending on how the integration took place. Learners who were placed in a mainstream school without the necessary support from parents and teachers often fail or drop out of the education system completely. In the majority of cases the schools where learners with special educational needs have been successfully integrated there has been collaboration between the special school, the full service school, the support staff and the parents. Together they have created specific programs for the child that are effective and the outcomes realistic and achievable. “Inclusion is a product of many people's rethinking of the nature and quality of special education, as well as a by product of new ways of thinking about teaching and curriculum” (Sapon-Shevin, 2001: 37).

2.9 The Role of Research in Inclusive Education

Research has shown that all efforts concerning inclusive education must involve teachers and parents to be maximally effective (Donald et al, 2000: 259; Duncan, 2003: 344, Hornby, 1999: 153). Donald et al state that all research is necessary and “that although there may be interventions at different levels or with different groups, the main focus is on educating, supporting or empowering teachers, parents or other caregivers in their close involvement with the development of children “ (Donald et al, 2000: 259). As the inclusive education process develops, more and more questions arise. Do inclusive education programmes need to prove they are better than segregated ones? Is the social development of learners with disabilities more important than their academic achievements? What are the basic fundamentals necessary to support sustainable inclusive education practices? Many elements of inclusive education still need to be investigated as “the lack of agreement on the quality and value of the research data gathered to this point is indicative of more basic conflicts about the value and purposes of inclusion” (Sapon-Shevin, 2001: 37)

Pertinent to this particular study is the fact that slow delivery by government in the inclusive education arena as mentioned earlier in this chapter, has resulted in private

schools leading the way in inclusive education, many of which now have established inclusion policies and practices in place (Chambers, 1999: 164). Furthermore, it has been found that case studies and the sharing of people's stories has had a positive impact on others in the process of inclusive education as a whole. Many parents feel 'lost' and are still not sure what or how to go about placing their children in an inclusive education environment (Chambers, 1999: 163).

Finally, it should be noted that the research pertaining to inclusive education could have leanings toward the emancipatory paradigm in that it falls against the backdrop of the social model of disability as expressed by Abberley (1996: 63) which challenges the pre-existing structures in society that discriminate against persons with disabilities. Furthermore, within the ontology of the emancipatory paradigm multiple levels of reality are recognized as they are in the constructivist paradigm. The emancipatory paradigm stresses "the influence of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender, and disability values in the construction of reality". In addition, it emphasizes that that which seems "real may be reified structures that are taken to be real because of historical situations." (Mertens, 1998: 20). Mertens puts forward that special education research and the meaning of total inclusion needs to be investigated as it has been "constructed by regular and special education administrators and teachers, parents who have children with and without disabilities, and students with differing types and severity of disabilities" (Mertens, 1998: 20).

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter begins by examining the research design used in this study, namely qualitative research with an interpretive/constructivist view in line with a phenomenological research approach. It provides an explanation as to why this form of research has been used in this study. This is followed by an explanation of the sample and sampling methods that were employed in the study. The following section examines the methodology and the data collection tools that were used with particular emphasis on the pilot study and interview process. This is followed by values of ethical considerations undertaken during the research process.

3.1 Research Design

There are many differing methods that are used to gain a better understanding of populations, individuals, and social and cultural groups (O'Leary, 2004: 121). In this qualitative study an interpretive/constructivist approach from a phenomenological design paradigm was undertaken.

Essentially, qualitative researchers are more interested in understanding human behaviour rather than explaining it (Babbie and Mouton, 2004: 270). A qualitative design was seen as central to this study as the research problem focuses on gaining a thorough understanding of the constructions held by a particular group of individuals towards a specific area of educational transformation.

In order to examine how participants understand the world, the study followed the interpretive /constructivist paradigm. This is because interpretivism "acknowledges and explores the cultural and historical interpretations of the social world" (O'Leary, 2004: 10) while constructivism "claims that meaning does not exist in its own right; rather it is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation" (O'Leary, 2004: 10).

This research design identifies that reality is socially constructed through the multiple mental processes of individuals. In line with an interpretive/constructivist paradigm, this study explored the research question from the participant's point of view. Within this paradigm the researcher is an active participant in the process and needs to be conscious of the fact that his/her own constructs of reality may influence the interpretations. Throughout this study the interpretive/constructivist paradigm remains the underlying basis to the methods of data collection and interpretation of the findings.

In order to gain an insight into phenomena, which is an individual's lived experience of a particular object, the phenomenological design approach may be adopted. Phenomenology can be defined as the "study of phenomena as they present themselves in direct experience" (O'Learly, 2004: 122). Qualitative research methods are used to enable the researcher to study social and cultural phenomena in terms of its specific context. Essentially, the phenomenological approach questions what the individual's experience is like, "the feature that distinguishes phenomenological research from other qualitative research approaches is that the subjective experience is at the center of the inquiry" (Mertens, 1998: 169). The research process is generally inductive in its approach, resulting in the formulation of new hypotheses and theory (Mertens, 1998: 161,169). Using the phenomenological approach, it is the researcher's goal to discover the meaning of the world as experienced by the individual (Mertens, 1998: 169). Furthermore, phenomenological research is viewed as the philosophical base for interpretive research approaches concerned with qualitative studies of reality constituting practices.

The focus of this study is to explore and interpret the **lived experience** of parents, teachers and facilitators of learners with intellectual disabilities as they enter secondary school and adolescence. It focuses on how these individuals make sense of their direct experiences and is about gaining an understanding of their personal interactions within the framework of home-school relations with regard to inclusive education practices.

The methods of data collection used in this study were qualitative personal and interactive data collection methods. These were favoured in order to access multiple

constructions of reality, and values that guided the researcher were made explicit to the research product (Mertens, 1998: 13). Cuba and Lincoln state that the interpretive/constructivist paradigm is best suited for a qualitative research study (Cuba and Lincoln in Mertens, 1998: 161). This qualitative approach was appropriate to the current study as it delivers the 'reality constructions' (Mertens, 1998: 13), as experienced by the participants involved with the Special Educational Unit at the school. Further information into the data collection methods used in the study will be discussed in chapter 3.3.

3.2 Population

After a researcher refines concepts and measurements he/she needs to decide who or what to study. The population for a study "is that group (usually of people) about whom we want to draw conclusions. We are almost never able to study all the members of a population that interests us, however, and we can never make every possible observation of them" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 100). A study population is "that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 174). In a broader sense this research study explores the arena of custodians of learners involved with inclusive education. The population selected were parents, teachers and facilitators involved with learners with special educational needs as they were seen as the most effective contributors to this research study.

3.2.1 Sample and Sampling Method Used in the Study

The method of purposeful sampling was used in the current study. Purposeful sampling is based on the hypothesis that the investigator wishes to understand and gain insight into, and subsequently selects "a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998: 61). In addition, purposeful sampling is where a researcher selects a sample based on their, "own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of your research aims" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 166). In this study, the sampling process was viewed as purposeful, in that the small group of individuals

selected from the population were deemed to be the most knowledgeable in the research topic and could thus provide the researcher with purposeful data.

When selecting a sample the researcher needs to go into further detail about the relevant population. As mentioned above in the population section, the population selected in this study were parents, teachers and facilitators. Only those involved with learners with intellectual disabilities attending a special education unit at a private mainstream school were selected for the study. This was because the aim was to identify the challenges that face parents and teachers in the progression of the inclusion process. As the school and community reside in an affluent suburb of Cape Town, the sample would be considered as privileged with regards to their socio-economic status.

3.2.2 Sample Size

The optimal sample size in a researchers study “is directly related to the type of research you are undertaking” (Mertins, 1998: 270). In this study interviews were conducted with three parents of learners with intellectual disabilities, and two facilitators of these learners to gain insight into their experiences of the challenges they face in the progression of the inclusion process. In addition the head teacher of the Special Education Unit and the school psychologist were interviewed to gain further understanding and provide a more rounded view into the situation.

3.2.3 Selection Criteria

The participants who were seen as persons who had a direct influence in the education of the learners with intellectual disabilities attending a special educational needs unit at a mainstream high school and were most suited to providing rich descriptive data of the research problem were purposefully selected. These participants included the

parents of the learners, the facilitators of the learners, and the teachers involved with the Special Educational Unit run at the school.

The parents who were chosen have all been involved with the school for at least five years, as well as the placement of their children in inclusive schools in general. The parents had long-term experience of the inclusive education field with regards to attitudes towards their children, forming relations with teachers and schools, as well as other parents. Because of this experience, these parents could identify experiences in secondary school as unique and separate from previous experience in primary school, as opposed to parents who were only entering the inclusive education arena at high school level. Furthermore, they would have developed an understanding of the processes at the school specific to this study from their long-term involvement with the school.

Teachers who were interviewed were the head teacher of the Unit and the school psychologist. The head teacher of the unit was viewed as having the closest relationship with the learners within the school environment regarding their education. The school psychologist plays an interesting role as adviser, mediator and confidante to the learners, parents and teachers. He therefore plays an integral part in relations between the parents of the teachers of the learners attending the Special Education Unit.

The importance of the role of the facilitators in the inclusive process was identified in the pilot study. The facilitators were seen as sharing the lived school experience of the learners as a whole. Furthermore, they could provide input with regards to the home environment and the school environment and could give more objective and reflective opinions as to the experiences of the parents and teachers. As companions and assistants to the learners, the facilitators had developed close but separate relationships between the parents and the teachers. As a result, in some ways they were the go-between regarding home and school experiences. They could also provide insight as to the teachers' viewpoints of parents and the parents' viewpoints of teachers. While not being parents or teachers themselves, as individuals integral to the inclusive education process, they shared many experiences with the parents and the teachers. The facilitators could see the impact on the home and school

environments on the learners. Subsequently, they were often in a position to offer advice and help parents and teachers make informed decisions regarding the learners. Thus, they had a direct impact on experiences at home and school level, as they could be the 'voice' of the learners in that they could give insight as to why the learners were behaving in a certain way.

The parents, teachers and facilitators were each contacted by telephone and meetings were set up for one-on-one interviews. Of all the potential participants identified and contacted, only two were unavailable for interviews. One was a parent of a learner with intellectual disabilities who attended the school, and the other was a previous teacher at the Special Educational Unit.

The inclusion criteria for participants in this study were specific to:

- Persons directly involved with the education of adolescent or post - adolescent learners with intellectual disabilities.
- These learners had to be attending a regular /mainstream high school.
- These learners must have attended a regular /mainstream primary school.
- The participants had to be parents, facilitators or teachers of the learners.

Exclusion criteria consistent of:

- Parents, facilitators or teachers only involved with learners with physical disabilities.
- Learners attending a special school for intellectual disabilities.
- Learners with intellectual disabilities, who had not attended regular/mainstream practical.
- Learners with intellectual disabilities themselves.

The selection process was made easier by the fact that all the participants were linked to learners with intellectual disabilities attending the Special Education Unit at a mainstream high school. Subsequently, the participants comprise of parents and facilitators of learners attending the unit, the coordinator of the unit and the school psychologist.

3.2.4 Research setting

The school is situated in what is regarded as an upper-level, privileged economic suburb of Cape Town. As a whole, the school campus consists of divisions of a primary, middle and high school. The school caters for learners with a variety of special educational needs, from those with mild learning problems to those with more severe intellectual disabilities. Learners with milder special educational needs are catered for in the mainstream classes whereas those with more severe learning disabilities participate in the special needs educational programme at the Special Education Unit.

The Special Education Unit is part of the school campus but is separate to the mainstream school. It is a separate class with a uniquely designed curriculum for each learner, the idea behind the programme is very much in line with that of the social model of disability in that the learners with intellectual disabilities are integrated in a school environment, equal to that of peers of the same age, and that these learners play a participatory role at the school. The unit is well established and subsequently there are 'tried and tested' structures in place to support and sustain the inclusive educational process. Furthermore, many valuable lessons have been learnt since the inception of its inclusion practices.

3.3 Data Collection Methods Used in the Study

Data was obtained from the participants through the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers and facilitators. Additional data was gathered through the use of post-interview field notes and a journal that was kept throughout the research process. By way of member checking, there was also follow-up communication with the participants via telephonic conversations and e-mail correspondence during the transcription process to verify their responses from the interviews.

3.3.1 The Interview Process

The primary sources of data were person-to-person, semi-structured interviews with an interview schedule that were held with all the participants. Person-to-person encounters are the most common forms of interview in order to elicit information from people. In qualitative research the goal is to obtain a specific kind of information. The researcher wants to discover what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton in Merriam, 1998: 71). During the interview, the interviewer should always “assume neutrality, with regard to the respondents knowledge” while at the same time, adopt a stance that is “non-judgemental, sensitive and respectful of the respondent” (Merriam, 1998: 84, 87). In this study adopting a position of neutrality was a huge challenge for the researcher as he has been an activist for inclusive education for a long time. Conducting a pilot interview was of great help in realising this and gave the researcher an opportunity to reflect on ways to be more disciplined in the interviews that followed.

With regard to the interpretive/constructive design - we cannot see how people have organised their world and how they have attached meaning to things; we can only question them about these things. In this study the participants were interviewed in an environment familiar to them - the parents were interviewed in their homes while the teachers and facilitators were interviewed at the school.

In qualitative research, the data collection and analysis processes are often seen to be progressive, “in that a second or subsequent interview in a series should be better than the previous one as the interviewer may have gained insights from previous interviews” (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 34). As the researcher was new to the interview process a pilot interview was conducted and analysed to gain insight and confidence with this progressive process.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gain data in the study. This is because they are viewed as the most common form of interview used to achieve the aims of qualitative research within an interpretive/constructivist design (Merriam, 1998: 93). Essentially, the semi-structured interview is guided by a set of questions and ideas to

be explored, “but neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is predetermined” (Merriam, 1998: 72). The use of this interview format in the study allowed the researcher to react to the emerging worldviews of the participants as well as new ideas on the research topic (Merriam, 1998: 74).

Questions were posed and constructed with the aim of allowing the researcher “to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton in Merriam, 1998: 72). At all times during the interview the participants were asked for their interpretation of events. After the participant's initial response to a lead question the researcher enquired further, focusing on aspects of that response to gain a deeper understanding of the participant experiences.

The researcher used probes and responded to participants while they were answering questions and comments to follow the thread of something already asked (Merriam, 1998: 80). After the initial response of a participant to a lead question, the researcher inquired further, focusing attention on aspects of that initial response, to gain a deeper understanding of their experience. The researcher would gesture for the participants to continue talking by raising his eyebrows and used verbal prompts such as “oh really, why do you think that was?” These probes are seen as impossible to structure ahead of time as they are dependent on how the participant responds to a lead question (Merriam, 1998: 80). Subsequently the researcher used probes when he felt the participants “were onto something significant” (Merriam, 1998: 80) when exploring the depth of a lead question.

3.3.2 Journal and Post Interview Field Notes

Throughout the study, the researcher gained understanding and insights on various aspects of the research topic and recorded them in a journal. These insights would occur at all stages of the research process, but mostly while reading the transcribed data or reflecting upon interviews and other information gathered. Subsequently, the journal contained questions about the research topic, ‘notes to self’ regarding areas for further exploration and reflections and comments concerning the responses of

participants. These understandings and insights contributed to the research process in acquiring a holistic and deeper understanding of the research problem. Merriam recommends that researchers keep a record and write down their reflections throughout the research process. These are seen to allow the investigator to monitor the process of data collection as well as begin to analyze the information itself (Merriam, 1998: 88).

Post-interview notes were taken to aid the data collection process and provide for the early analysis process. These notes were taken after the interview, as opposed to during the interview, because the researcher is a quadriplegic who does not have the use of his arms. Subsequently notes were taken after the interview with the aid of an attendant; it was felt that it would have been intrusive and destructive for the attendant to assist the researcher during the interview process. Post-interview notes are recommended as these reflections could capture “insight suggested by the interview as well as descriptive notes on the behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal, of the informant” (Merriam, 1988: 88). Patton argues that, “using a combination of observations, interviewing and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings” (Patton in Merriam, 1998: 137).

3.3.3 Member Checking

Mertens puts forward that member checking is perhaps the most critical criteria regarding the credibility of the research. It is essential that the researcher verify the constructions developing from the data collection and analysis processes with the participants (Mertens, 1998: 182). In this study there was feedback with the participants via telephone or email during the transcribing process. These follow-up communications were to verify their responses from the interviews and amend accordingly.

3.4 The Pilot Study

A pilot study in the form of an initial, one-on-one semi-structured interview with one parent was conducted. Pilot studies fulfil an important range of functions in qualitative research. A pilot study is seen to enhance the cohesion and validity of a study. Essentially a pilot study is a mini version of a bigger study or a more focused 'pre-testing' of a questionnaire or interview schedule (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 34). In this study, the latter applies. One of the benefits of a pilot study is for researchers to gain an understanding and experience in a certain area of data collection.

Pilot studies are thus strongly recommended if "the researcher lacks confidence or is a novice, particularly when using the interview technique" (Holloway in Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 35). With regard to this study, the pilot study was of great help to the researcher in developing confidence towards conducting interviews. Moreover, the researcher developed a better understanding of the importance of remaining neutral in the interview process.

During the pilot interview the researcher found this immensely challenging because he has been an activist for inclusive education for many years. Subsequently, the researcher found himself tempted to give his own opinions and join in conversation with the participant. Thus, the self-realisation of remaining impartial to the research topic and disciplined during the interview process was beneficial to the rest of the data collection process.

Frankland and Bloor suggest that a pilot study provides the qualitative researcher with a "clear definition of the focus of the study, which in turn helps the researcher to concentrate data collection on a narrow spectrum of projected analytical topics" (Frankland and Bloor in Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 35). A pilot study allows for the preliminary testing of the planned statistical and analytical procedures, giving the research the chance to evaluate the value of the data collected. The researcher is then able to identify any alterations needed in the data collection method and this process is conducive to a more thorough analysis. Furthermore, it elucidates new

ideas, approaches and clues and also exposes problematic areas which are previously unforeseen (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 35).

During the process of data collection and analysis in this pilot study the researcher began to develop a greater understanding and feel for the research topic. They were subsequently included in the interview process to discover their lived experiences. The pilot study was also hugely beneficial in developing the overall confidence of the researcher with regard to all aspects of carrying out a research study.

This particular parent was conveniently chosen for the pilot study on a purely practical basis as she was immediately available for an interview and lived nearby. This interview was conducted, transcribed and analysed by reducing the data into common themes. The first draft of the analysed transcript and themes were presented to the supervisor. This was done to ensure that the researcher had developed an idea of how to hold an interview and conduct analysis thereof, before continuing with the research procedure and successive interviews. After discussion and input from the supervision, it was found that the researcher was on the right track and interviews were then arranged with the rest of the participants. The data from the pilot interview was incorporated into the rest of the data of the study.

It should be noted that although the conduction of a pilot study does not guarantee the success of the study it is seen to increase the probability of its success. However, on the whole pilot studies are strongly recommended in terms of the procedural benefits to the research and also promoting accountability from researchers. Indeed, Van Teijlingen & Hundley put forward that researchers hold “an ethical obligation to make the best use of their research experience by reporting issues arising from all parts of a study, including the pilot phase” (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 36). The data from the pilot study was not used specifically towards the completed findings of the main research study. Essentially the pilot study exercise was conducted for the researcher to gain insight and experience into the interview and data analysis process. The researcher benefited a great deal from this exercise in that he gained confidence in conducting an interview effectively. Furthermore, with regard to the data analysis process, the researcher learned that he had to develop a more inductive approach and

method when analysing qualitative data particularly in the area of phenomenological research.

3.5 Data Collection Process in the Main Study

Data collection started after permission for this study was obtained from the school principal granting full access to the school resources and staff of the Special Educational Unit. As mentioned above, the school psychologist also acted as mediator between the researcher and parents of the pupils attending the Unit. The identified parents, teachers and facilitators were all contacted by telephone and meetings were set up for one-on-one interviews. All interviewees were given a brief description as to the nature of the research, and they were asked to sign an information/consent form (see Addendum A) agreeing to voluntarily participate in the study and allow for the audio-taping of the interviews.

Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. All the interviews conducted with the participants were one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

3.5.1 Interviews with Parents of Learners with Special Educational Needs

One-on-one interviews were conducted with three of the parents of learners with intellectual disabilities attending the new Special Education Unit at the school. These interviews were conducted at the home of the parents. It was thought that the parents would be more responsive and open about their experiences in a familiar environment.

3.5.2 Interviews with Teachers of Learners with Special Educational Needs

One-on-one interviews were conducted with their head teacher and coordinator of the Special Education Unit and the school psychologist, who is closely linked to the Special Education Unit and who has a direct link with the parents of the learners attending the Unit. These interviews were conducted at the school, as this was the most practical venue.

3.5.3 Interviews with Facilitators of Learners with Special Educational Needs

One-on-one interviews were conducted with two facilitators of the learners with intellectual disabilities attending the Special Education Unit. One interview was conducted at the school, while the other was conducted at a quiet location nearby. These venues were chosen for purely practical reasons.

Post-interview field notes were jotted down and observations were recorded in a journal throughout the research process.

3.6 Ethical Responsibilities and Considerations

The guiding principles for this research study are to preserve the dignity, rights and well being of all participants through beneficence, non-maleficence, respect and justice, which indicate a systematic regard for the rights and interests of others in the full range of academic relationships and activities (Mertens, 1986: 24).

Beneficence is the requirement to serve the interests and well being of others, including respect for their rights. It is the principle of doing good in the widest sense. The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1978) states that beneficence is “maximising good outcomes for science, humanity, and the individual research participants and minimizing or avoiding unnecessary risk, harm, or wrong” (Mertens, 1998: 24). The principals of beneficence are to prevent and remove harm, promote welfare (doing good for others)

and weighing up whether the risks outweigh the benefits (Beauchamp and Childress, 1994: 17).

In this study beneficence was practiced. The aim of this research was to give a voice to the participants with the intention of understanding their lived experience and the resultant findings were to be used to help improve their situation, where possible. Furthermore, the new researcher made sure that the study was worth conducting, that it would make a meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge and that it was ethically sound. To this end, a proposal of this research study was drafted. Once all corrections were made to the satisfaction of the supervisor and researcher, a revised edition was submitted for postgraduate review. After further recommendations and corrections were made, the proposal was submitted to the ethics committee of the University of Cape Town where it obtained ethical clearance.

Non-maleficence is defined as the principle of doing, or permitting, no foreseeable harm including infringement of rights as a consequence of the research. As the corollary to the principle of beneficence it is the principle of doing no harm in the widest sense. During this research study the researcher ensured that, as far as possible, no harm or risk came to the participants in the study. Whether in the form of physical or psychological risks, “blows to self-esteem or ‘looking bad’ to others, threats to one’s interest, position, or advancement in the organisation, to loss of funding for a program, on up to being sued or arrested” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 292).

The researcher in this study made sure that the participants were not exposed to “risks that are greater than the gains they might derive” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: 53). A transparent relationship was established between the researcher and the participants. During this research study it was viewed that the learners, and the parents of the learners were possibly the most vulnerable to any sort of harm. This was felt because the parents were exposing their feelings about the teachers at the special education unit and were thus at risk of repercussions from their statements. This identified area of concern was put forward by the researcher at the beginning of interviews, and all parents conveyed the assurance that they were at ease with the processes of data collection and dissemination of the findings. Moreover, the researcher made certain

that there were no quotes or any other pieces of information used in the findings that could identify any particular participant of the research.

It is crucial that participants in research are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. Within research there needs to be justice and a concern for the rights of the participants. Mertens (1989) defines justice in research as “ensuring that those who bear the risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it; ensuring that the procedures are reasonable, not exploitative, carefully considered, and fairly administered” (Mertens, 1998: 24).

The primary concern for all research that involves human participants is the protection of their human rights and equitable treatment (Polit & Hungler, 1995: 17). Throughout the study, the researcher made sure that respect for human rights, were upheld and that all participants were treated equally, and on an equal status as the researcher himself. It was made certain before the interviews that the participants were comfortable with all processes and they were consulted and informed of the research procedures at every level where it concerned them.

Ethics in research “should be an integral part of the research planning and implementation process, not viewed as an afterthought or a burden” (Mertens, 1998: 23). Merriam (1998) puts forward that while researchers can be guided by regulations governing ethical concerns, ultimately the burden of responsibility lies with the individual investigator to adhere to these regulations (Merriam 1998: 219). Ethical dilemmas may arise in processes dealing with people and types of relationships, and issues that involve trust and responsibility towards research participants. In qualitative research these two processes are usually data collection and dissemination of findings (Merriam 1998: 217).

It is generally accepted that further major ethical issues that need to be addressed in qualitative research are those of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and privacy, voluntary participation, and feedback (Merriam, 1998: 216-219; Mertens, 1998: 275-281).

Informed consent

It is imperative that voluntary informed consent is gained from all participants in the research, that is “without threat or undue inducement (voluntary), knowing what a reasonable person in the same situation would want to know before giving consent informed), and explicitly agreeing to participate (consent) (Mertens, 1989: 24). Informed consent “implies that subjects are made adequately aware of the type of information you want from them, why the information is being sort, what purpose it will be put to, how they are expected to participate in the study, and how it will directly or indirectly affect them” (Kenmar 1999:192). It further emphasises the importance of the researchers accurately informing participants of the nature of their research. Participants are only able to provide informed consent if they have a complete understanding of their requested involvement inn the study. This includes “time commitment, type of activity, topics that will be covered, and all physical and emotional risks potentially involved” (O’Learly, 2004: 53)

Permission to conduct this research was requested and obtained from the school principal, parents, teachers and facilitators after a description of the research was given. All participants were given a consent form to sign (see Addendum A)

The consent form contained information about the researcher (name, university and degree completing). The focus of the study and the reasons for the study being conducted were clearly indicated, as was the need for the participants' input. The consent form was used to obtain permission to audiotape each of the interviews.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity

In all research the participants right to privacy, confidentiality and if appropriate anonymity should be respected. Privacy is the control over others’ access to oneself and associated information; preservation of boundaries against giving protected information or receiving unwanted information (Sieber, 1992 as quoted in Miles & Huberman, 1994: 293). Confidentiality involves protecting the identity of those supplying the research data. It is important that as far as possible the identities of the participant and the organizations/situation that they are involved in are protected. Protection of confidentiality may involve the following: “secure storage of data; restricted access to raw data; obtaining permission for subsequent use of data;

publication of research findings in a manner that does not allow for ready identification of subjects; and eventual destruction of raw data” (O’Learly, 2004: 54). Anonymity goes one step beyond confidentiality and “refers to protection against identification from even the researcher” (O’Learly, 2004: 54). Anonymity should be provided and any information that would indicate which individuals or organizations the data was obtained from should be avoided.

In the study, the assurance of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were given both verbally and in writing (on the information sheet). The participants were further assured that their names would not be used in any part of the research process. However, the confidentiality of the research setting was less easy to assure because there are not many other schools with special education units of the nature.

Voluntary participation

The respondent’s decision to participate in the research must be a voluntary decision that was made without any form of pressure. Respondents also need to be made aware that they have the right and freedom to choose not to assist the researcher in the study, as well as to remove themselves from the study at any time if they wish to do so. “Sharing information honestly and fully, consulting and obtaining agreement, keeping promises and not deceiving each other, as Gillon (1994) identifies, will all help to ensure that consent to participate is informed and voluntary” (Bindless, 2000: 2). In addition participants were autonomous (made the rational decision to participate); not coerced (no power play was involved) and not induced (no money or reward was given). The process leading up to the interviews enabled the participants to make a choice as to whether they wanted to be involved with the study or not. This was made clear by telephone as well as the information sheet and consent form. The participants were also asked verbally prior to all interviews. Subsequently, all participation was entirely voluntary, and there was no coercion involved.

Feedback

It is crucial that the researcher ensures authenticity of the obtained data from the participants. This can be done by asking participants to “confirm accuracy, relevance, and authenticity of interpretations. Researchers can ask respondents to confirm that they have captured the essence of their story” (O’Learly, 2004: 51).

Feedback regarding the transcribed data and emerging theory was communicated to participants via e-mail and telephone as part of the process of member checking. The participants were given common outcomes of the study without revealing specific viewpoints, which may have identified certain individuals.

3.7 Limitations of the study

There were no interviews with the pupils themselves as the focus of the research is not on the pupils' lived experience but rather on the barriers and challenges facing those who facilitate and provide education for them, namely, the parents, teachers and facilitators. This does represent a possible bias and weakness in the research as the study takes the standpoint that these individuals act in the best interest of the pupils' education. Throughout the study there were no financial or time constraints.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methods of data collection in the study. These methods were viewed as the best possible means of gleaning information and gain understanding of the shared, multiple reality constructions with regard to the research question. The chapter began with the qualitative methods used in the study. The sample and sampling method employed was then described. This was followed by the data collection methods used in the study, with particular focus on the type of interview and the pilot phase utilised in the study. This was followed by a description of interviews with the participants, which made up the bulk of the research. Ethical considerations were then discussed with an explanation of how each of these considerations was accounted for.

CHAPTER FOUR - DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter provides a description of the data analysis process used in this phenomenological research as a described by Giorgi (Giorgi, 1975). This is followed by an example of how the analysis process was applied in this study. Thereafter the findings of the study are then examined.

4.1 Data Management

Data management is of crucial importance for qualitative researchers, as a rigorous and systematic approach to data analysis can lead to credible findings. Normally large amounts of data come from a variety of sources and it is important “to build or create a ‘data set’ that can be managed and utilized throughout the process of analysis” (O’Learly, 2004: 186). Both Wolte (1992) and Levine (1985) state that data management and data analysis are integrally related and that there is no firm boundary between them” (Wolte, and Levine in Miles and Huberman, 1994: 45). The main issues when managing data are ensuring “high-quality, accessible data, documentation of just what analyses have been carried out, and retention of data and associated analyses after the study is complete” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 45).

In this study the bulk of the data was gathered from audio taped interviews, which were obtained with permission of participants. Each interview was recorded on a separate cassette. For the audio taping of the interviews the researcher took the advice of Easton, McComish and Greenberg regarding equipment failure and environmental conditions that could affect the quality of the research (Easton, McComish and Greenberg in Groenewald, 2004: 15). At all times the researcher carried back-up batteries and cassettes. Interviews were conducted in settings that were far from background noise and interruptions.

These audio taped interviews were then transcribed verbatim and put into MS Word document format as soon as possible after the interview. The cassette tapes were then

labelled with the participant's name, the date, and whether they were a parent, educator or facilitator, for example "interview with Sharon, second of February 2007, parent". As mentioned previously in chapter three, due to the researcher being a quadriplegic, all post interviews were conducted with the assistance of an attendant and were recorded on cassette-tapes. The researcher received some assistance from the volunteers from University of Cape Town's Disability Service who transcribed a few of the interviews and put them into Word documents. This process took a very long time so the researcher hired the services of a professional to transcribe the rest of interviews cassettes to save time. All of these MS Word documents were labelled in the same manner as the cassette is filed under a folder called interviews.

The follow-up telephone calls that were made as part of the member checking process were recorded on cassette tape. Thereafter the researcher listened to them and typed important information from them into a Word document. All follow-up communication that was made via e-mail was copied and pasted into MS Word documents and labelled accordingly.

During the research process the researcher created a journal as a Word document where entries were made periodically throughout the research process, particularly during the data collection process. In order to clarify the method of data storage, the researcher created a folder on the computer consisting of various files containing MS Word documents relating to the interviews and data collected. These included transcriptions from all interviews; post interview field notes; all notes made from follow-up communication; all notes made during the data analysis process for example the grouping of units of meaning etc; and the research journal. Multiple backups were made of all files and folders.

Documents that were kept in hard copy included the information sheet provided to the participants before the interviews, and the signed consent forms from each participant.

4.2 Data Analysis Used in This Phenomenological Study

In this section the data analysis steps that were followed in this phenomenological study will be outlined. The researcher conducted the analysis process in accordance with the procedural steps described by Cresswell and Giorgi. They put forward that in phenomenological research, investigation into the data could only begin once all prejudices have been 'bracketed out' (Cresswell, 1998: 148; Giorgi, 1975: 84; Groenewald, 2004: 17). This process is also known as Epoche and refers to putting aside all preconceived ideas to allow for an objective interpretation of the data (Moustakas, 1994: 178). It refers to things in the research that cannot be, "felt to be known in advance or without internal reflection and meaning" (Moustakas, 1994: 178).

In the study the audiotaped data from each interview was transcribed into a Word document. The researcher then went through a process of 'freeing' himself from any presuppositions before interpreting the data. All the transcriptions from the interviews were read and re-read until the researcher fully comprehended what the speakers were saying and was "familiar with the entire protocol" (Ratner, 2001: 2)

The researcher went through the transcriptions to examine how individuals were experiencing the topic. From the text a list of significant statements expressed by the participants was made. The process of horizontalization followed where each statement was treated as having equal) and formulated into lists of non repetitive statements (Cresswell, 1998: 147).

These statements were grouped into 'natural meaning units' expressed by the participants (Cresswell, 1998: 147; Giorgi, 1975: 87). These units of meaning were grouped together in areas of similarities and dissimilarities. These meaning units are essentially those statements, which are seen to elucidate the researched phenomena (Groenewald; 2004: 18). Furthermore, meaning units may consist of a single word, or several sentences. What is important is that each unit contains a distinctive and unique idea (Ratner, 2001: 1). When identifying meaning units in this study, the researcher examined the data focusing on the literal content, number and significance of times a meaning was mentioned, and also how it was stated (Giorgi, 1975: 88;

Groenewald; 2004: 19). Furthermore, the researcher adopted an approach of “maximum openness”, with the understanding that the specific aim of the study was not yet taken into account (Giorgi, 1975: 87).

The researcher is a quadriplegic, who is paralysed from the shoulders down, and subsequently uses voice-activated software to operate and to type Word documents on his computer. While reading through an interview transcript the researcher would identify meaning units and verbally ‘repeat’ them onto a new document. This process was repeated for each interview transcript, which resulted in seven separately labelled documents of meaning units, one for each interview.

From these seven labelled new documents, all meaning units were copied and pasted into one document thus creating a single pool of data. As part of the reduction process, meaning units from this pool of data were then categorized into groups of similarity and the redundant units were eliminated (Giorgi, 1975: 88; Groenewald; 2004: 19; Moustakas, 1994: 177). While formulating categories from the meaning units from the transcribed responses to these questions, the researcher was aware of identifying only those units that pertained to the purpose of the study, namely the lived experience of the participants at secondary school.

Once the meaning units were grouped they were further analysed to discover specific similarities in meaning to form categories or “clusters of themes” (Cresswell, 1998:177). Each category was developed into a textural description, which elucidated ‘what happened’ and also a structural description, which examined ‘how’ phenomena was experienced by the participants (Cresswell, 1998:149). During structural description all possible meanings and ‘divergent perspectives’ of the phenomenon were explored (Cresswell, 198:150).

As part of phenomenological reduction, Giorgi states that if there are any questions in the study they should “be put to the data consecutively” (Giorgi, 1975: 88). This is done in order to examine the categories in conjunction with the raw data (from which the categories are derived from) in terms of the specific purpose of the study (Giorgi, 1975: 88). To clarify, the researcher needs to ask himself or herself, “how does this statement reveal significance about the research question?” (Giorgi, 1975: 88).

Themes were extracted from all the categories emerging from the participants' experiences. This allowed for common themes from all the participants, descriptions to emerge. The final step involved reducing the categories into main themes. These themes integrated the textural and structural descriptions into narratives, which represented the findings. These findings comprised of composite, exhaustive descriptions capturing the 'essence of meaning units within the holistic context' (Cresswell, 1998:150; Giorgi, 1975: 88; Moustakas, 1994: 178; Groenewald; 2004: 19).

The ultimate goal of phenomenological research is summed up well by Polkinghorne when he states that is to produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear, and articulate description of an experience. The reader of the report should come away with the feeling that "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne in Cresswell, 1998: 177).

4.3 Research Findings

In this chapter the findings from this study are separated into themes and categories, each of which was taken from the participants' own experiences of children with intellectual disabilities being educated in inclusive educational settings within South Africa. Participants' own words are used to further support and motivate themes and categories. It needs to be noted that throughout the rest of this chapter 'learners with intellectual disabilities' shall in many instances, depending on the context, just be referred to as 'learners' for the purpose of easier reading. Furthermore, actual names of learners have been omitted to preserve their confidentiality and anonymity, and instead learners are referred to in the quotations as "she/he", "her/his", "her/his" etc, as applicable.

At the completion of data analysis 11 themes had been identified from all the categories that developed. These included the following:

- Positive experiences of inclusive education.

- Shortcomings of inclusive education experienced by the anticipants.
- Parent involvement in inclusive education.
- Challenges for learners
- Positive experiences of facilitation
- Shortcomings of facilitation
- The effect on the family
- Parents frustrations
- The home and school as partners
- Positive relations and the way forward

Theme 1: Positive Experiences of Inclusive Education

This theme was developed from categories that related to the positive experiences that participants reported, including the following:

- Embracing all learners with or without the disabilities within the school environment
- Being surrounded by and interacting freely with learners without disabilities
- Development of life skills for learners with intellectual disabilities
- **Category 1: Embracing all learners with or without the disabilities within the school environment**

All participants reported their experience of inclusive education as, “...*embracing all children, whatever their disability is within the school environment*”. To highlight the interaction of the learners with intellectual disabilities in the school environment a participant representing the school stated, “*Let the children experience what they're able to in the same environment as any another kid would.*” He added, “*I regard that not as inclusive education, but as supportive education*”.

- **Category 2: Being surrounded by and interacting freely with learners without disabilities**

The following abstract from one participant highlighted the positive experience of inclusive education for their child: “*Socially he has benefited from inclusion, he has a*

lot of friends, you know, a girlfriend and everything, so for him the mainstream side and the social side of it is great.”

- **Category 3: Development of life skills for learners with intellectual disabilities**

The participants reported that their experience of inclusive education was positive when assisting learners with intellectual disabilities to develop life skills. This was demonstrated in the words of the participant representing the school, *“In my experience, inclusive education has been a platform for the learners with disabilities to make contacts with people who could help them once they left school. Our job is to develop human beings”*. Another participant, also a school representative stated, *“The most important consideration for me is their functionality outside of school. So the program has become a program not focusing on academic skills”*.

Theme 2: Shortcomings of Inclusive Education Experienced by the Participants

This theme evolved from categories relating to the negative experiences of the participants regarding the practice of inclusive education. These categories included:

- Highlighting the child’s differences.
- Lack of support in South Africa.

- **Category 1: Highlighting the child’s differences**

One participant representing the school expressed the difficulty experienced regarding the differences between learners with intellectual disabilities and other learners: *“On the one hand we have chosen to include these children in our school, but on the other hand, the price they pay for the inclusion is that we are constantly highlighting their differences. So again it’s a quandary, a trade-off because you want them to be with the other kids but at a certain point it becomes a tyranny to keep them there”*. A parent described her experience as such: *“I mean so you see that goes against the whole inclusion topic - how inclusive is it if they are in a separate unit? That is a huge worldwide debate, you know having kids in a mainstream setting but separate unit,*

and I struggle with that myself. At high school level you want learners to be included but the inclusion only serves to highlight their differences”.

- **Category 2: Lack of support in South Africa**

To underline the lack of support experienced in South Africa, a participant representing the school stated, *“I’m trying to forge partnerships with everybody because we are all alone, and we are all isolated down here in South Africa. We need to work with each other, we need to support each other. It’s not England where everybody’s got this and everybody’s got that. This Ubuntu you know. This is the African solution”.*

Theme 3: Parent involvement in Inclusive education

In this theme, categories that expressed the parents' needs for involving themselves with issues surrounding inclusion were identified. They included:

- Parents' experiences in fighting hard to make inclusive education happen
- Making schools competent in addressing children's needs
- Parents' own educational needs
- **Category 1: Parents' experiences in fighting hard to make inclusive education happen**

To highlight the importance of parents' involvement, one woman (a parent) stated the following: *“You need as a mother... to be involved at that time because you can't afford for your child to fall apart. You want exactly the opposite and you give and do anything. You're doing it for your child's benefit, but that benefit will only be realised if you go through the process so it was a really, really hard time”.*

- **Category 2: Making schools competent in addressing children's needs**

Assisting to make the schools competent in areas surrounding inclusive education was highlighted by participants as follows: *“It was brand new for everybody”*; *“Schools were incompetent at that stage”*; *“Our children were guinea pigs”*; *“They just*

weren't organized"; "We had to be involved to help this school to be where it is today".

- **Category 3: Parents' own educational needs**

Another participant demonstrated the parents' needs for empowerment as follows: "I had to go and learn myself. You must understand the problem itself, then you can go forward with facilitation". She added: "You have to decide what to believe and what not to believe". Another parent expressed: "I did a lot of research as to how to improve the situation and how to improve her speech".

Theme 4: Challenges for learners

This theme was deduced from the categories related to the challenges of not being able to cope in a mainstream class environment. These categories included:

- No major focus on academic achievement
- Competitive high school environment
- Less integration with their peers
- Learner's questioning of his or her own identity within the school
- Experiences of isolation

- **Category 1: No major focus on academic achievement**

Examples of abstracts in relation to the challenges are highlighted below: "Whereas in the primary school there is a lot more leeway, a lot more experiential leeway I think in terms of the education process"; "A greater chance of being to be in the same classroom as their peers in primary school". The above two abstracts related to the lack of focus of academic achievement.

- **Category 2: Competitive high school environment**

To illustrate the problem of the competitive nature of the high school environment, one participant stated the following: "In grade three we had a positive experience with the buddy system, but this is not used in high school where everybody is

competing instead of working together". (The buddy system is a system of cooperative learning in the classroom where learners of various abilities team, normally in pairs, to help each other with their schoolwork).

- **Category 3: Less integration with their peers**

The following two abstracts highlight the challenge of diminishing integration with their peers: *"At the primary school level she spent more time with her peers whether it was PE, or art, or drama, or music, or whatever, but that doesn't happen at the high school level"*. A participant representing the school added, *"The level of academia at Middle School is already too high for a special kids, and so they stop being active in other stuff to cope, and thus become less and less integrated with others. That's a sadness of mine and I'm not sure how to change that or help them to change that to make it easier"*.

- **Category 4: Learner's questioning of his or her own identity within the school**

In questioning identity and place within the school and amongst peers, this was what was highlighted by the participants: A participant who represented the school relating the experience of the learners in her classroom stated: *"They have got the insight to know that they are different and it frustrates them so, ja, from that point of view I think that's the hardest part"*.

One parent described the difficulty that her child went through as follows: *"She fantasises about being like the other kids. It was a catch 22 situation -- being in the mainstream environment. She didn't identify herself with the other special needs kids, and on the other hand, she realised how different she was to the mainstream kids and isolated she was. She is very splintered, she had some amazing insights and ideas but her condition has hindered her development and independence"*. Another parent shared the following experience with her child as follows: *"She sometimes gets very hurt and she becomes more conscious that she was left behind, pupils are less accepting at high school"*.

- **Category 5: Experiences of isolation**

A participant from the school pointed out the isolation felt by some learners with intellectual disabilities at the school in the following statement: *“It’s the kid who looks like everybody else but who has got an IQ of say 60 – 80, that people will think what’s the matter with this person? Is he a retard? Is he a freak? And they won’t be able to engage with him. Those kids feel terrible, terrible isolation, of being in this place - if you have a problem, and you are introverted and shy, then that seems to be a formula for loneliness.”* Another parent of a child with an intellectual disability who had experienced isolation within a school environment stated: *“If my child is going to suffer and be isolated in any way in a mainstream environment then for me it’s not appropriate”*.

Theme 5: Positive Experience of Facilitation

This theme was developed from categories relating to positive experiences of facilitation. These categories comprised of the following:

- Facilitators helped the teacher
- Learners benefited from having a facilitator
- Facilitators helped maintain structure
- A close relationship developed
- Recognized as important conduit between home and school

- **Category 1: Facilitators helped the teacher**

To illustrate the importance of the facilitator in the classroom one participant who was a facilitator stated: *“You need facilitators for the teacher to get the job done -- someone who can buffer that system -- facilitation is essential to keep the balance right and to leave the teacher to do the work.”*

Another participant who was a parent added that, *“...you want to make it as easy as possible for that teacher because that teacher is the most important thing because if she’s not gonna manage ...the headmaster’s gonna say “right, sorry ...not working”...and that’s it. And you so don’t want that to happen.”* A participant

representing the school commented, *“they also are there to assist the teachers and more and more we are finding that the presence of facilitators benefits the entire classroom”*.

- **Category 2: Learners benefited from having a facilitator**

The following abstracts emphasised how the learners had benefited from having a facilitator: A participant representing the school experienced that, *“facilitators identify and serve a purpose of the child’s development and because it’s an individual thing they can do that”*. A participant who was a parent of a child with an intellectual disability stated: *“We would not have coped without it. She needs that one-on-one communication. We see their role as developing a relationship, one to help the development of the child”*. A participant who was a teacher said: *“facilitation is a must -- without that the kid can get lost in mainstreaming”*.

- **Category 3: Facilitators helped maintain structure**

The abstracts below illustrate how the participants in this study believed that facilitators helped to maintain the structure of the classroom. A parent stated: *“We know that she will not bath or eat properly. If she is not facilitated – she will spend time alone in the computer. She would end up being a couch potato”*. A facilitator in this study identified that, *“She puts all her trust in me and it comes out when she is really upset about something, she is just incredible, you build up that relationship.”*

Another participant who is a parent said, *“right through schooling she’s had somebody with her - we started get people to keep her focused, at Middle School I got somebody to come in at the afternoon to continue stimulus and for friendship. Those facilitators had become like sisters to her. We’ve hired people to continue stimulus, and to be companions to her - I hired somebody for Saturday evenings to go out with her”*.

- **Category 4: A close relationship developed**

The following two abstracts highlight the positive experiences of how facilitators enhance relationships: A participant who was a parent expressed, *“...the facilitator has a job to do, but it’s so important for that special needs kid to having a special*

relationship with the teacher as well". Another participant representing the school stated that: *"with the really gifted teachers, they recognise this and they use the facilitator even though they are paid for by individual families, they become teacher assistants and it's a wonderful opportunity"*.

- **Category 5: Facilitators recognized as important conduit between home and school**

A participant highlighted the important role that facilitators adopt as a conduit between home and school when she stated: *"You have to combine work and home – I mean like school and home and bring it together. Obviously you can't make all the decisions for the parents, naturally there are limits, but you know what is going on."*

Theme 6: Shortcomings of Facilitation

In this theme the shortcomings of facilitation were outlined in the following categories:

- Too many facilitators crowd the classroom
- Teachers can shirk responsibility
- Some teachers were threatened by facilitators
- Facilitator shared lived experience
- Difficulties experienced when facilitators leave – they are young and move on
- Facilitators can have negative impact on the learner

- **Category 1: Too many facilitators crowd the classroom**

The following abstracts emphasise the experience of having too many facilitators in the classroom: A participant highlighted this in the following statement: *"I really believe strongly that the facilitator can be of wonderful use to the teacher in many ways and doesn't only, and shouldn't only be there for one child. It's not healthy. I never ever want her to think that there is somebody especially for her."* A teacher who had experience this overcrowding expressed that, *"there are too many people in the classroom, for one, second is the child never does anything by them self"*. Another

teacher added *“One has got to be careful about not overloading too much with too many mixed ability needs, because there has got to be a limitation, and you have got to spread the load”*.

- **Category 2: Teachers can shirk responsibility**

Some participants experienced that having a facilitator sometimes resulted in teachers not teaching the learner with a disability. The following abstracts elucidated this: A teacher described the experience as such: *“I see just from observing the other teachers who are in a mainstream classroom with a facilitator being in the classroom, the child who is with the rest of his classmates, is that often the teacher shirks the responsibility. And it becomes the facilitator’s problem to teach that child grade ten maths, where it shouldn’t be like that”*. A participant, a parent who had experienced this lack of responsibility explained, *“The teachers have slacked off. I also stood back, knowing that there has been a facilitator there. I think the school has slacked off, things get left to the facilitator”*.

- **Category 3: Some teachers were threatened by facilitators**

The phenomenon of teachers feeling threatened by the presence of facilitators is highlighted in the following abstracts: A parent stated, *“some teachers say, ‘There’s no way, I don’t need any help’ and also the whole feeling of not being used to having another adult in the classroom. Initially it’s quite difficult, there are teachers who have not had that experience, and, the minute you have a facilitator coming into the classroom, it’s very hard for them to accept that, it’s very threatening”*.

A participant representing the school expressed, *“I think they do feel threatened, definitely. Because they think that if they are standing in front of a classroom where you have got say it 18 absolutely normal mainstream children and two children with special needs, they possibly think the other children are seeing them as not knowing how to handle those two children, so it undermines their authority”*. Another teacher stated that, *“Speaking as a teacher, I guess I don’t want to lose that relationship with the child. It should be a teacher-pupil relationship. And a facilitator is just that, a facilitator, not the teacher. We are trying to get the facilitator involved as little as possible, to cultivate independence in the child”*.

- **Category 4: Facilitator shared lived experience**

To illustrate the challenge that facilitators faced sharing the lived experience of the learners, the participants expressed the following: A parent explained that, *“It’s the most unbelievable experience for anyone who is interested in education. It’s difficult because they are experiencing what I am talking to you about. They are seeing people who are not accepting, who are not embracing and there was one facilitator who didn’t manage well at all in a primary school, she actually couldn’t bear it any longer”*. One participant - a facilitator, highlighted the difficulty in remaining neutral when she stated, *“I want to scream and shout at them not to do so, because she is above that. It can be frustrating, because people will ask me whether she understands -- and you want to club everybody for not understanding.”*

- **Category 5: Difficulties experienced when facilitators leave – they are young and move on**

The problem of facilitators leaving the families to find other employment, thereby causing a break in the continuity of the life of the learner and home is demonstrated by the following words of a participant: *“The facilitator situation is very difficult because a lot of the facilitators are quite young and they wanna move on”*. Another parent stated, *“[Facilitator] was her facilitator for a long time, from the middle school into the high school it was really devastating. [Facilitator’s] still like this with her [facilitator] has an incredible relationship with her. [Facilitator] speaks to her like... everyday like at least twice. So [facilitator] is still a very big part of her life and when [facilitator] left that was very hard and it was very difficult to get another facilitator”*.

- **Category 6: Facilitators can have negative impact on the learner**

The following two abstracts highlighted the negative experiences of the presence of facilitators: A parent explained the experience with a child as follows, *“The kids did turn on her and I think it was the presence of the facilitator that made the difference. That made it more obvious that there was something about her, and that’s why they targeted her. Another parent added, “ There was a stage when he didn’t want to go back to school -- because of the facilitator, he was given a facilitator when he went to middle school, this drew attention to him from the other pupils and they teased him and calling him a retard and questioned why he had a facilitator. What was wrong with him?”*

Theme 7: The Effect on the Family

This theme was deduced from the categories related to the effects on the family of having a child with an intellectual disability. These categories included:

- Parents empathised with their children, feeling their pain
- Parents were overprotective and found it hard to let go
- Parents were grateful for inclusion programme
- Children treated differently to siblings
- Parents had lower expectations of their children

- **Category 1: Parents empathised with their children, feeling their pain**

The following abstract illustrates the participants' experiences of dealing with the pain of their child: A participant who is a parent expressed that: *"She will sometimes come home and she will be upset about something and I have to work out what is going on and that is hard because she is just a kid you know she won't come home and tell on anybody. She is devastated and I have to try work out why she is devastated and then we can talk about it"*. Another parent highlighted natural feelings of anger in this experience when she explained: *"I felt the pain as a mother, but I could not go and hit that child, because it would not be appropriate"*.

- **Category 3: Parents were overprotective and found it hard to let go**

The following abstract illustrated the phenomena of the difficulties experienced regarding participants in 'letting go' of the children: A parent described her experience as follows: *"You don't know who you are giving child to and that is very very hard to do and you got to do it. It was hard because I didn't feel safe"*.

A participant expressed the schools perspective when she stated that, *"I think the biggest thing the parents can do is back off sometimes and I think that they need to be there to support the child rather than try and make the decision for the child, which is incredibly hard to do, because you know especially with the child with more severe difficulties. The parents have always been there in the role of protector and I know what's best, you know, so sometimes they don't know what's best"*. The participants' experience of being overprotective was highlighted in the following abstracts: A

participant who was a parent expressed: *“I just wanted my child to feel safe and be okay. I tried to save him from pain”*. Another parent added: *“I have always been hands on, maybe more than some of the other mothers. I have always been overprotective, but maybe for a reason”*.

- **Category 4: Parents were grateful for inclusion programme**

The following two abstracts from participants highlighted the parents' experience of gratitude towards the inclusion programme: A parent expressed that: *“It takes the most unbelievable load off your shoulders -- when he is at school, from Monday to Friday it is a relief”*. Another parent added: *“at Middle School there was structure and they had a tailored programme, which was excellent. We were grateful and stood back”*.

- **Category 5: Children treated differently to siblings**

The ensuing abstract illustrated the complicated feelings of guilt experienced by parents from treating their children differently: A parent described her experience as follows: *“With her it is non-conditional, there's no conditions. And with all the others, there are. And I think, why? It's because they've got to fit in with society. Who the hell cares whether they do or they don't? I feel very strongly about that. I'm as guilty as hell with my own children.”* Another parent expressed the similar experience: *“She gets away with murder, compared to the boys, and they will sometimes question us. Why must I do thus, when she doesn't? It is all about communication, and that is difficult”*.

- **Category 6: Parents had lower expectations of their children**

The following abstracts highlighted the low expectations by the parents of their children with intellectual disabilities: One participant stated that, *“I literally didn't know if he was gonna be around. So, there were no expectations. There are expectations because I know what he can do in terms of behaviour and uh, certainly not in terms of academics and writing”*. Another parent added: *“She will write but it skew, and who cares? You know? She is proud of it. So that's what's important”*. A participant who represented the school highlighted the negative effect of these low expectations as follows: *“I think it really short sells the child, it really does. Um,*

because these kids can do unbelievable things that no one would ever have expected him to be able to”.

Theme 8: Reflections and Mixed Emotions about the Future

In this theme, categories relating the reflections and emotions that participants felt about the future of the children were identified. These included:

- Holistic aspect of living with a child with an intellectual disability
- Concern about the future of their children once they left school
- **Category 1: Holistic aspect of living with a child with an intellectual disability**

The participants expressed that there was a holistic nature to living with a child with an intellectual disability. The experiences relating to this are highlighted in the following abstracts: *A parent expressed that, “Socially it's been difficult for us as a family, but it has made us more compassionate, but it has been tough. It's been about getting through every day and everything”.* Another parent reflected: *“So priorities change, and if anything I go with it, I go with where she takes me. I can't take her, I mean I can give her opportunities and exposure and all that, in the end she's the one who lets me know what she can take and what she can't take, and what's too much for her and what isn't. And that goes for the whole inclusion thing as well”.*

A further parent added: *“Your life is changed, you know it's different. My biggest goal with him was just for him to be a, a content happy kid, person, to feel good about himself and to be independent”.*

- **Category 2: Concern about the future of their children once they left school**

The following abstracts illustrate the concerns that parents experience for their children once they leave school: A participant who was a parent highlighted the need to have structures in place in the following: *“If she is not facilitated – she will just spend time alone in the computer. If we had no involvement with her, she would end up being a couch potato”.* With regard to the future decisions their child would make, another parent expressed that: *“We need to guide him, steer him in the right direction.*

We are very concerned with the things he does with these friends etc, that he doesn't get taken advantage of". The above abstract demonstrates the tendency among participants to want to protect their children.

To illustrate the predicament of leaving the care of the child with an intellectual disability to the siblings, one participant stated *"We have to control this before it gets out of hand, because if we leave this legacy to our children's siblings they are going to be incredibly resentful"*.

Theme 9: Parents Frustrations

This theme revolved from categories relating to frustrations as experienced by parents. These categories comprised of:

- Frustration with Teachers and school
- The failure of parent support groups
- Parents felt excluded as a resource

- **Category 1: Frustration with Teachers and school**

The following abstracts illustrated the frustration of their parents regarding the complacency of the school. A parent expressed: *"...Even as I talk to you now, my frustration will grow and grow. And I must tell you, I don't think they understand the unbelievable load on parents' shoulders to want to do the best for your child, to know the opportunities you want your children to have, if there isn't a full-time person around first."* Another parent added that: *"I feel that they have become complacent with him, and he has become low priority as far as they're concerned – we've got to be on the school's case, which is why parent keeps on phoning"*.

Theme 10: The Home and School As Partners

This theme developed from categories identifying the partnership between home and school as experienced by the participants. These categories were as follows:

- It was about relationships and personalities
- Partnership with parents was sacred
- Essential to have open lines of communication
- Behaviour of the learner indicative of home school relations

- **Category 1: It was about Relationships and Personalities**

The following abstracts illustrate the participants' experience of relationships in the inclusion process: A participant who was a parent had experienced that *"...over time teachers have volunteered because it is all voluntary, nobody is told that they have to spend time with her which I agree with one hundred percent ...and the feedback I get is just enormous, not only for her, and that's why I say I don't think its got to do with teachers its just relationships and people.* Another parent expressed: *"You've got to understand each person, you have got to know what their different needs are. It is a shared responsibility - it is about relationships".*

- **Category 2: Partnership with parents was sacred**

The abstracts below highlight the value of the partnership between home and the school as experienced by the participants. A participant who was a representative of the school stated that: *"The relationship with parents is absolutely critical in that we see ourselves not as experts but as visitors, in other words we are visitors in the lives of these children and the children belong to the parents. There's no differentiation. It's just adults working together. It's also important because in our experience with a lot of these children, we are dealing with – how can I put it – dashed hopes. It means that we treat them, almost with reverence, a kind of holiness, you know that this relationship is sacred, don't contaminate it".* A parent stated: *"It's hard, but once it's in place, it's a commitment. It's a commitment from the school, it's a responsibility and once they've taken that on they must stick to that, because once it falls apart they can't continue".*

- **Category 3: Essential to have open lines of communication**

The importance of experiencing constant and effective communication is highlighted by participants in the following abstracts: *"Communication with the parents is an essential part of the process. It can't happen without it, because there is just so much*

happening, that there's got to be continuity.” Another parent stated, “When it comes to having a special new kid in a regular school environment, it is so important to have constant communication and support. Teachers and parents needed to liase with each other on a regular basis”.

- **Category 4: Behaviour of the learner indicative of home school relations**

The behaviour of the learner was identified as an indicator of the stability of life at home. This is expressed in the following abstracts: A participant explained that: *“You'll know something is up because your child let you know in two secs just by their behaviour”*. A participant representing the school stated, *“My personal experience of our group is if one of the kids is having a bad day or had problems at home, you know it all comes to school with them, and then they are not in a good frame of mind and then they can be a lot more challenging”*. A participant who was a facilitator added, *“That's why I say we want to know what's going on at home so you can expect a day like that”*. A parent also reflected: *“This all upsets her – it will come out in her behaviour at some stage, cause her to be very unstable and she needs routine, she needs stability”*.

- **Category 2: the Failure of Parent Support Groups**

The abstract below related to the parents' experience of the unsustainability of support groups: A participant identified her difficult experience as follows: *“It was very hard really. I'm talking about those parents support group, because you know we called all parents of all the kids, from remedial problems to more severe disabilities, whatever...a lot of people came, but you know, it's also a life issue. Parents are parents! There are those who are too dependable and those who aren't”*.

A participant representing the school explained that: *“I worry that support groups become breeding grounds for what Freud called the Repetition Compulsion, you know. Just going over the same issues again. The problem is the parents don't see themselves as a homogenous group. It's quite straightforward to get certain parents together, but the other parents don't see themselves in the same boat as this”*. He added: *“I don't think we have been very good in mobilising support groups, I think we are very good at mobilising and managing individual families and parents, but not groups, no”*.

- **Category 3: Parents Felt Excluded as a Resource**

A participant who is a parent highlighted her frustration at being excluded as follows: *“They’ll bring in people from Britain and from America and they’ll discuss everything about that inclusion program and this inclusion program, and the parents are not invited to be a part of this. The parents are huge teachers in this whole process and they’re not even told about that”*. Another parent expressed her disappointment as follows: *“They’ve done an unbelievable thing. And yet, the most basic thing is just not been happening. They are not including us”*.

Theme 11: Positive Relations and the Way Forward

The theme developed out of categories relating to positive experiences with regard to school relations as well as the positive outlook concerning the way forward. These categories include

- Commitment from the school
- Parents are appreciative of the wonderful support
- There is a need for an open-minded attitude

- **Category 1: Commitment from the School**

A participant who was a parent identified the experience of having the commitment from the school principal as follows: *“Because that passes straight through to your teachers. And that passes straight through to kids. You know, the pupils.”*

- **Category 2: Parents were appreciative of the wonderful support**

The following abstracts highlight the positive experiences of support the parents received from the school: *“So much was done and looked at and ways of support were developed which is what you want. The support we’ve had from the school has been the key when I don’t know what to do. I can go to (school psychologist) and we will sit down and discuss it -- emotionally they’ve been great”*. Another participant stated with regard to support, *“From middle school to high school, all the structures that were put into place. Support from parents and teachers and the schools and facilitators”*.

- **Category 3: There was a need for an open-minded attitude**

It was identified that an open-minded attitude would assist inclusion process. The following abstracts expressed this: A parent stated: *“Because I think it is new – people feel like they don’t know what they are doing. And it’s not a nice feeling to feel when you are supposed to be the teacher teaching the children”*.

A participant representing the school highlighted of the challenge of the change in mindset as follows: *“The biggest thing for me is the teacher bias. If a teacher doesn’t believe in it, and the teacher doesn’t want it and doesn’t actually want to move with the type of thing, that’s the biggest problem. Because I think that if you teach it does buy in a hundred percent the communication and relationship with the parent will be there”*. The participants further expressed: *“Whereas I think if they come to the table to you know where – you know, we can find the answer together and help each other”*. A parent expressed *“And I believe that the opportunity that has been given to the teachers, the adults, the kids, the lot by having special children in that environment is beyond measure”*.

Conclusion of Findings

In this chapter, the experiences of the participants in this study towards the inclusion process of children with intellectual disabilities were provided. It examined the views, challenges, shortcomings and hardships of practicing inclusive education and how that some learners who experienced barriers to learning and development were left behind. This chapter then highlighted the crucial role of facilitation, the effects of inclusive education on the family and the school. It then looked at the relationship between the home and school and how important it was to make sure that the learners with intellectual disabilities are the main focus of this process. It then identified the triggers that caused parents to be frustrated. To conclude, this chapter emphasised the importance of positive relations between all stakeholders and outlined the way forward.

CHAPTER FIVE - RESEARCH DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the research are discussed. The findings are split into two main groups. The first group comprises of the themes relating to positive experiences of inclusive education experienced by the participants. The second group includes the themes relating to the negative experiences of the participants in the study concerning inclusive education. The findings related to the themes of facilitation, both positive and negative, are discussed separately at the end.

5.1 Discussion Relating to Positive Experiences

The positive experiences classified into the following themes:

- **Positive Experiences of Inclusive Education.**
- **The Home and School as Partners.**
- **Positive Relations and the Way Forward.**

5.1.1 Theme 1 -- Positive Experiences of Inclusive Education

The majority of the participants had positive experiences relating to inclusive education. They viewed inclusive education as incorporating all children within the school environment, regardless of any disability that they may have. It was considered as important that the education provided was outcomes-based, as opposed to goal-driven in an academic sense. The main focus of their positive experiences was that learners with disabilities were integrated into society as early as possible. The school environment was viewed as a microcosm of society and in this regard it was important to have children with disabilities integrated with non-disabled children, thus creating an environment of mixed ability. The attitude was one of, *“It is not what you learn at school that is of prime importance, it is how you learn to work with other people”*.

The participants placed great emphasis on the humanity of all people and on developing the potential of all children. The ultimate goal of the participants was for

learners with intellectual disabilities to become members of general society as opposed to being relegated to more traditional arena such as sheltered employment workshops. The participants were dedicated to developing the functionality of the learners outside of the school environment. Philosophically and structurally the inclusive education programme run at the school fell within the paradigm of the social model of disability, where all people are seen as being equal citizens enjoying the same rights and opportunities for participation in society. With regard to this, the findings of the study were in line with current literature. This has established that participants supportive of inclusive education generally regard it as a 'life philosophy' in line with the social model of disability (Chambers, 1999: 9).

Furthermore, to the participants, inclusion of the learner did not necessarily mean that a learner with a disability must be placed in a mainstream class. This is not in complete concordance with the legislated interpretation of inclusive education, which advocates that all learners be educated in the same class. The *Salamanca Statement* of the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (June 1994) proposes that all learners with special educational needs should be included into regular classrooms alongside their 'able-bodied' peers regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

However, Magrab puts forward that inclusive education is about removing barriers and increasing educational opportunities (Magrab, 2003:7). The findings revealed that the school has strived towards this in creating a special education unit for the learners with intellectual disabilities within the mainstream school campus. Although this unit is separate from the mainstream school, it serves to remove barriers to education for learners with intellectual disabilities

Previous research suggests that those advocating for learners with intellectual disabilities to be placed in an inclusive environment, are doing so in order to increase their opportunities to develop social competence and friendships with learners without disabilities, as well as to address academic goals (Fuchs and Fuchs in Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy and Widaman, 1998:279). The findings of this study strongly support those of Fuchs and Fuchs. The inclusion programme at the Special Education Unit has experienced much success in this regard. This was supportive of the

school's outlook that appropriate inclusion does not necessarily mean forcing children with disabilities to be in mainstream classes.

5.1.2 Theme 10: The Home and School as Partners

The findings revealed that the participants felt that inclusion is about relationships and personalities, rather than just about teaching methods. Relationships and personalities surrounding the learners with intellectual disabilities were felt by the participants to have had a greater impact on their development than the curriculum. These experiences support the viewpoint that inclusion is about social participation rather than academic achievement. This finding was reinforced by the fact that profiles were made of each learner with an intellectual disability attending the Special Education Unit, and their individual learning programmes were developed accordingly. A further finding was that the school treated their relationships with the parents as "sacred" and recognized the value of the parents' contribution to the development of the learner. This validated Wolfendale's finding that that the "importance of parental involvement has been legitimated for many years" (Wolfendale, 1999:1).

Another important finding of the participants' experiences revealed that constant and effective communication at all levels was critical in the inclusion process. Creation of interactive support systems between schools and parents were seen as crucial. These systems could facilitate the process in terms of assisting teachers embrace inclusion, defining the role of facilitators and establishing the "scope" of involvement by parents. These findings are in concordance with previous research that revealed the aspect of intellectual disability placed great emphasis on the strength and amount of support the learner may need to function in society (Taylor, 2000: not paged). This underlines the need for creating strong support systems and mechanisms that will facilitate effective interaction in a school environment.

A further finding was the importance of structure to the everyday functioning of the learner with intellectual disabilities. The participants experienced that the behaviour of the learner was an indication of the stability of life at home or at school. The findings revealed that the learner would struggle with any disruption or change in the

environment. From this point of view it was important that all those involved in the life of the learner were aware of their role and the specific needs of the learner. This emphasised the importance of home-school relations and the necessity for constant and open lines of communication.

5.1.3 Theme 11: Positive Relations and the Way Forward

The findings revealed that all the participants in this study had had positive experiences with the principal of the school. They were unanimous in agreement that the personality, attitude and character of the principal at the school was a key factor in the success of the Special Education Unit and inclusion programme at this school. This finding was supported by previous research, which suggests that teachers and administrators including principals and support staff need to show “great leadership in designing creative solutions to the problems inherent within pullout programs and remedial education” (Sapon-Shevin, 2001:37).

Further findings disclosed that overall, the parents had had favourable experiences with staff at the Special Education Unit. The parents were immensely appreciative of the inclusion programme at the school. They also agreed that they would not have coped without the support of the school psychologists and the rest of the teachers involved with the Unit. This emphasised once again the importance of parent support by the school within inclusive education. In order for learners with special needs to be fully integrated in inclusive educational settings there needed to be a partnership and collaboration between parents of learners, teachers and administrators.

The findings also revealed that the participants had had negative experiences with a traditional closed mindset of education which had limited the development of inclusive education practices. Subsequently, they all agreed that an open mind was essential to the positive development of any inclusion process. Furthermore, the findings showed that many teachers experienced apprehension, and even felt threatened by the inclusion process, as they felt inadequately trained and prepared for this ‘new’ phenomena. However, the participants identified that the inclusive process was a tremendous opportunity for everyone involved with learners with intellectual

disabilities and for their integration into society. These findings are in line with previous research that states that “limits of special education have been removed by those teachers who have formally redefined their roles and responsibilities as dictated by the traditional duties associated with general and special education teachers”(Dukes and Dukes-Lamar, 2006:not paged). Furthermore, teachers need to understand the strengths and needs of each learner and teach accordingly. Teachers also need to evaluate their current teaching methods and strategies in order to create “the conditions that can foster the growth of more inclusive practices” (Ainscow, 2001:3). It is encouraging that this concept is supported by the South African government. They postulate that in order for teachers and managers to support each other as well as their learners, they will need “new skills in curriculum differentiation, curriculum assessment, assessment of potential, collaborative teaching and learning, collaborative planning and sharing, reflection on practices and co-operation” (Department of Education, 2002:65).

5.2 Discussion Relating to Negative Experiences

Negative experiences of inclusive education of the participants in this study were identified in the following themes:

- Shortcomings of Inclusive Education Experienced by the Participants.
- Parental involvement in Inclusive education.
- Challenges for learners.
- The Effect on the Family.
- Reflections and Mixed Emotions about the Future.
- Parents Frustrations.

5.2.1 Shortcomings of Inclusive Education Experienced by the Participants

The findings revealed that the participants had experienced difficulty in including the learners with intellectual disabilities in regular classrooms as they progressed into high school. The participants saw this placement as detrimental to the development of these learners as well as the education of their mainstream peers because they are developing at different rates. Inclusive education refers to a change in the education

system to accommodate all learners whereas mainstreaming refers to the 'fitting in' of children with disabilities into a pre-existing educational system: (Department of Education, 2001:7). This highlighted the dilemma in the current study experienced by the school in integrating learners with intellectual impairments. To the best of their ability the school had accommodated these learners and built an education system around them. They had attempted to do this as a regular school in line with their attitude of embracing all learners. However, the placement of these learners in a Special Unit in some ways seemed to highlight their differences and lead to further segregation. Subsequently the school seemed to be caught in a 'catch 22' situation. They identified the challenge as getting the balance right in terms of meeting the needs of the learners of intellectual disability legitimately.

This finding highlights a shortcoming of the social model of disability in that it puts great emphasis on being functional in society at large. This in turn discriminates against people with intellectual disabilities who are unable to fully function in accordance with 'societal norms'. Subsequently, persons with intellectual disabilities may feel discriminated against as they are referred to as being thick or stupid. In the current study the common discriminatory term for the learners with intellectual disabilities was 'retard'. All the participants had experienced this discrimination at various times throughout the education of the learners with intellectual disabilities. This discrimination was experienced as an obstacle to learning and hindered the development of the learners with intellectual disabilities. The school was very quick to react to any bullying of the learners by their mainstream peers.

With regard to the South African context, the findings revealed that participants experienced a sense of isolation in the inclusive education scenario. This finding is of great concern from two aspects. Firstly, there is strong policy in the form of *Education White Paper 6* to promote and establish inclusive education within South Africa with particular strategies to develop support systems (Department of Education, 2001: 25). Subsequently, for a school to feel isolated suggests that they are not getting the support they need from the state or any other established organisational structures. Secondly, the school in the study is a private school and serves an affluent community with access to an array of resources. If this school felt

unsupported, one gets the impression that there is very little support, if any, for government schools.

5.2.2 Theme 3 -- Parent involvement in Inclusive education

The findings disclosed that the parents in this study have experienced incredible hardship throughout the educational career of their child. They have often felt alone and had to rely on themselves to gather information regarding their child's condition and the best way forward for them. They have always had to be there for their children and protect them from harm. These parents have chosen a difficult path of lifelong commitment to the development of improved quality of life for their children. These findings are supportive of previous research by Chambers and Duncan who observed that parents who put their child through an inclusive process had not chosen the easy option of special schools with regard to access to professional services (Chambers, 1999: 163; Duncan, 2003: 343).

With regard to the inclusion at high school level, the findings relating to the parents' experiences supported the viewpoint of Magrab (2003: 7) and Christie (1999) who reported that parents who had been through the inclusion process at a private school level had to readdress obstacles to inclusive education at high school level. They then suggested that these obstacles were of a dual nature. Some were similar to those as experienced at primary school level while others were new and deemed specific to the high school experience, the latter being the primary focus of this study.

5.2.3 Theme 4 -- Challenges for Learners

The findings revealed that when learners with intellectual disabilities progressed from primary school into the next level of school they became less and less integrated in the regular classrooms. These learners rapidly fell behind their mainstream peers with regard to academic and social development. These findings support earlier research by McNamara et al (2000) and Duncan (2003). They reported that this created

pressure on high schools and their learners to perform academically and has had an adverse effect to the development of programmes for learners with disabilities and special educational needs (McNamara et al, 2000: 474, Duncan, 2003: 343).

Some of the participants, mostly parents, expressed a genuine sadness about the learners with intellectual disabilities left behind by their peers but could not offer any solution towards integrating them into an ever-increasing competitive environment.

Findings from this study revealed that participants experienced that the social exclusion of the learners with intellectual disabilities was one of the key challenges as the developmental rift widened amongst all learners. Cognitive and emotional development takes place within adolescents as they progress in terms of concrete and abstract thinking and expand their “moral and ethical reasoning abilities” (Manning in Taylor, et al, 1999: not paged). However, the learners with intellectual disabilities do not develop natural cognitive functioning and thus struggle to function in society in a normal manner (Taylor, 2000: not paged; DPSA, 2000:22-23). As a result these learners did not go through this typical teenage experience with regards to boyfriends and girlfriends, going out to parties etc. The participants, most notably parents, shared in the hurt of their children as they were left out of conversations and general interaction with their mainstream peers during break time.

This ‘different’ level of cognitive functioning and intellectual capacity lay at the heart of the high school experience for the learners with an intellectual disability. These learners were not able to interact with the mainstream peers on an equal and regular basis. However, they had enough insight to recognize that they were different and so they questioned their sense of identity and belonging.

Other factors such as personality attributes and varying degrees of cognitive function and intellect determined the extent that the participants felt their children or learners were isolated or included. Findings showed that the learners with intellectual disabilities who had outgoing, confident personalities were more likely to experience social inclusion with the mainstream peers. Those learners with intellectual disabilities who were introverted and shy generally suffered tremendous isolation.

The findings showed that depending on the degree of these various factors, a mainstream environment could actually have a detrimental effect on the development of a learner with an intellectual disability.

The findings highlighted that another factor that came into play was the visibility of the intellectual disability of the learner. The participants identified that those learners whose disability was apparent had an easier time because their visible disability evoked a natural human response. In contrast, those whose intellectual disability was not visible struggled more because their regular peers could not understand why they could not interact properly. This often led to the learners feeling isolated. On occasion this also led to name-calling and conflict with their peers.

With regards to the apparent visibility of an intellectual disability the researcher has not come across any literature to support or dispute this finding. However, previous research supports the findings relating to the isolation of the learners with intellectual disabilities, as well as conflict with their peers. Such research has found that learners with intellectual disabilities experience intentional and unintentional attitudinal barriers. Unintentional attitudinal barriers generally refer to ignorance, lack of understanding or effort on behalf of the school system or teachers. Intentional attitudinal barriers involve learners with disabilities being isolated, physically or emotionally abused, with the latter being the most common (Pavri and Luftig, 2000: 8; Pivik, McComas and Laflamme, 2002: 102).

5.2.4 Theme 7 -- The Effect on the Family

When discussing the education or any aspect of the life of a learner with an intellectual disability, one has to take into account the impact the child has on the family and home environment. This is because apart from the learners themselves, parents are seen to be the most affected by the move towards inclusive education (Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy and Widaman, 1998:273). The findings supported this and furthermore suggested that the more parents were involved in the inclusive process, the more successful the inclusion and integration of their child was regarding their education and social development.

The findings showed that there are specific dynamics that arise from having a child with an intellectual disability in the family. The participants experienced that the activities of the family tend to revolve around the child and the disability of the child. The family has had to develop structures and coping mechanisms to deal with the day-to-day situations.

Further findings revealed that the parents in this study were more lenient with their intellectual disabled child in comparison with other siblings and they experienced complicated feelings of guilt about this. The findings also revealed that these parents had lower expectations of the child with intellectual disabilities.

Generally learners with intellectual disabilities were reported to have struggled with any change in the environment, changes that normal learners take in their stride. However, the findings revealed that to learners with intellectual disabilities, everyday phenomena such as traffic and travel into a different place could represent real trauma. This had an indirect impact on how the participants coped with the process of inclusion. Subsequently, parents experienced that they were often caught up in a situation where they were reacting to their child's behaviours, wants and needs and that they were constantly in a state of "damage control and repair". With regard to this, because they were so embroiled in the everyday life of the child to the most minute detail, it was often very difficult for them to stand back and look at the whole picture objectively. They experienced that sometimes it was hard for them to recognise that they were not always doing the best thing for their child.

For parents, their child required full-time attention and they had the responsibility of doing the best for that child, or what they perceive as being the best. Parents experienced that it was hard for them to hand over the responsibility of their child to others. It was often difficult for them to let go and to believe that their child was not as dependent on them as much as they thought. It was also difficult to trust in the school system.

Findings revealed that parents were grateful for the program because of the slow delivery by government in the inclusive education arena. This has resulted in private

schools leading the way in inclusive education, many of which now have established inclusion policies and practices in place such as the school in the current study (Chambers, 1999: 164).

5.2.5 Theme 8 -- Reflections and Mixed Emotions about the Future

The findings showed that the parents in this study felt as though they had been on an incredible journey regarding the inclusive education process of their child. They had been through the experience where their belief systems had been tested as they faced prejudice from others as well as coming to terms with their own prejudices and shortcomings.

The parents expressed that they have had to react to the individual needs of their child with intellectual disability throughout their development. In this sense, ' they have gone where their child has taken them.'

The parents stated that they had experienced a dilemma in following the inclusion route -- that of wanting the best for their child and wanting them to fit in naturally, but at the same time wanting to protect them from harm and not get hurt by others.

The findings revealed that the parents experienced genuine apprehension regarding the future of their children once they leave school. They are aware that that their children will need to have structures in place in order to function and live with quality-of-life. The parents still experienced the natural tendency to want to protect their children. They are concerned as to decisions their children will make, and what kind of friendships they will form with others. They worry that they will be taken advantage of. Moreover they worry about how their children will cope with changes that occur in every day life that may affect structures they have in place.

In general society, children grow up, leave home and very often assist their parents in their old age. The parents in this study face the likely possibility of having to look after or supervise the care of the child for the rest of their life. For some parents this proposes a daunting task with regard to time, money and energy. Subsequently they

are doing and all they can to prepare for when their children complete school and live at home. They are working together with the Special Education Unit to develop strategies and sustainable structures to achieve this.

Upon leaving high school many mainstream learners advance to tertiary academic courses, while learners with intellectual disabilities may take remedial courses to help them cope with their learning difficulties. The *Education White Paper 6* clearly states that “it is clear that some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support to be able to develop to their full potential” (Department of Education, 2001:16). The findings from this research supported this statement as it was found that the school accommodated learners with varying degrees of ability related to intellectual capacity.

Catering for these learners exposed the need for different and more functional approaches to their education, approaches that extended “beyond academics and into the social and work skills arena” (Dukes and Lamar-Dukes, 2006: not paged). The findings showed that this was the approach that had been undertaken by the school. Nevertheless, the participants experienced concern that the community at large was still hostile towards physical and intellectual disability. The challenge lay in making the work arena ‘friendly’ towards intellectual disability. This needs to be put in place to complement any inclusion practices at school level. If not, it will render the curricula useless because learners with intellectual disabilities would not be able to find work upon leaving school.

5.2.6 Theme 9 -- Parents Frustrations

It was found that not all home-school relations ran smoothly. The findings highlighted that on many occasions parents felt that their views were not being heard. They felt that there was a lack of commitment and appreciation of their burden of responsibility from the school. Parents also felt excluded as a resource of knowledge regarding inclusive education. They experience this particularly when they were not invited to

attend conferences on inclusion at the school, or consulted with on aspects of inclusion.

The findings revealed that parents believed that the school could do more to recognise that they had a wealth of knowledge and experience to impart on the inclusion process. This is in line with literature on inclusive education, which acknowledges the role of parents as equal partners in this process (McNamara et al, 2000:474). Parents need to feel “that they are valued and their efforts are not being undermined” (Department of Education, 2002:57). Schools have an important role with regards to promoting positive interactions between parents and teachers, as well as support. This would be in order for parents to “acquire better understanding of their child’s potential and progress” (Department of Education, 2002:57).

A further finding revealed that parent support groups that had formed had not been successful. This highlighted the findings of the influence of relationships and personalities in the inclusion process. Furthermore this emphasises how the participants identified themselves with disability in different ways. The findings showed that the parents did not view themselves as a homogenous group. The learners involved at the Unit had varying degrees of intellectual disabilities. Subsequently the parents did not see themselves as sharing the same experiences with regards to their children.

5.3 Themes 5 and 6 -- Positive experiences and Shortcomings of Facilitation

“Caregivers and extended families are integral to the functioning of a full-service school in terms of fully making use the knowledge and skills of families” (Department of Education, 2002:57). The findings surrounding the role that the facilitator had were both surprising and exciting. The researcher did not anticipate how important the facilitators were in the whole process of inclusive education for learners with intellectual disabilities. All the participants agreed that the facilitator played a crucial part in the success of any inclusion programme. From their experiences, none of the participants could imagine the inclusion process happening without facilitation.

The findings revealed that the facilitator essentially became part of both the family and the classroom set-up. In many ways they became the most important person in the life of the learner in terms of communication, companionship and self-expression. The findings showed that the facilitators greatly eased the burden of responsibility on the parents and teachers. Facilitators felt the need to combine school and home, they knew that they could not make decisions for the teachers and the parents but they felt that they should be involved. From their position, facilitators could give objective insight as to what was going on in the life of the learner and how best to deal with it. Most of the time they would know the reason for the learner's behaviour and could give valuable advice to teachers and parents.

Findings revealed that facilitator developed a real bond and that their close relationship with the learner played a huge role in their everyday lives, both social and academic. It was found that the facilitator had a hugely liberating and positive influence on the self-esteem of the learner in that they provided a means of independence away from the teacher and parent. The teachers and parents experienced a sense of relief and security regarding the well-being of the learner when the facilitator was around.

In other words, learners had a confidant with whom they could share and express their feelings openly without any fear of repercussions in terms of life in the classroom and family. This allowed for fulfilment of a much-needed requirement for the self-expression, self-understanding and self-esteem of the learner. It helped the learner develop his/her character and work through social interactions.

The findings also revealed that the presence of a facilitator could have a negative impact on the learner. This was particularly in cases of learners with mild learning disabilities, where an intellectual impairment is not as obvious. The learner might have looked 'normal' and subsequently be expected to cope like everybody else in the class, the presence of a facilitator with the learner could often cause the learner to be ridiculed and teased by his or her peers.

5.4 Limitations to the Study

The research topic revolved around challenges concerning learners with intellectual disabilities in the transition period from junior to high school. However, the learners did not participate in the study themselves. The participants in the study were the parents, teachers and facilitators of the learners who were viewed as the custodians of the learners' education. It was therefore assumed that these participants acted in the best interests of the learners and their education. This is viewed as limitation of the study. A further limitation to the study is represented by the small study sample. The research topic aims to explore the fundamental aspects relating to the inclusive education process regardless of socio-economic factors. However, it cannot be ignored that the participants in the study are of a privileged socio-economic status and subsequently have access to resources not available to the majority of the South African population.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings that developed from the categories identifying the experiences of the participants. In this chapter these experiences were given meaning and viewpoints or ideas. The findings were separated into two main groups and discussed according to positive and negative experiences. The theme of facilitation was deemed important and was discussed separately. The chapter concluded with a brief outline of the main limitations of the study.

CHAPTER SIX - RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Recommendations

This chapter presents recommendations in order to improve the situation of learners with intellectual disabilities in inclusive education. Areas of need were identified in the literature, from the present study's findings and the current situation of inclusive education in South Africa.

This study proposed recommendations in reaction to key findings which are listed below.

Finding 1: Parents were found to be underutilised as a valuable resource

Recommendations:

Education institutions including primary and high schools, tertiary education institutions and teacher training facilities should;

- Include parents of learners with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of the inclusive education processes.
- Utilise the parents as a valuable resource of knowledge in the development of new and existing inclusive education programmes.
- Invite parents to share their experiences at workshops and conferences, both local and international.

Finding 2: facilitators were integral to the inclusion process

Recommendations:

Further research should be undertaken to explore the role of the facilitators of learners with intellectual disabilities in the inclusive education process. Making facilitators an essential part of the national education system supported by the government and

incorporated into policy regarding the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa.

Finding 3: learners with intellectual disabilities experience exclusion at school:

Recommendation:

Schools should develop creative programmes and methods to include learners with intellectual disabilities thereby their integration within the schools. Research should be undertaken to explore a) barriers to inclusive education specific to learners with intellectual disabilities. b) common core social activities which promote the development of relationships between the learners with intellectual disabilities and those without (Dukes and Lamar-Dukes, 2006: not paged).

Finding 4: Home and school as partners

Recommendations:

The school used in the present study could examine and evaluate the operations of the Special Education Unit and the inclusion programmes that they run. From this they could form an effective working model that could be published and presented to other schools wishing to formulate inclusive education practises.

Finding 5: Shortcomings of inclusion

Recommendations:

The research and development of functional approaches to inclusive education that extend “beyond academics and into the work-skills arena” (Dukes and Lamar-Dukes, 2006: not paged) such as the program run at the Special Education Unit.

There is a lack of current governmental support systems for inclusive education practises in South Africa. Until the situation improves schools should endeavour to forge partnerships with each other and be school support centres. They should share

and disseminate information and collaborate in forming effective inclusive education programmes in both public and private schools. This exercise should have a research component attached to it. This will identify gaps in service delivery with regards to the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa.

Finding 6: Parent involvement in inclusive education

Recommendation:

The publication and sharing of personal life stories has been conducive to the awareness and improvement of inclusive education (Chambers, 1999, 9). Therefore schools and parent groups should serve as a platform for individuals to share their experiences of inclusion in the South African context.

There is a further recommendation specifically to tertiary institutions that have courses in disability studies. These institutions should undertake and promote further research into the lives of learner with intellectual disabilities and their families to assist in the expansion of the knowledge in this field in the South African context.

6.1.1 Dissemination of Findings and Recommendations

The researcher will disseminate the findings and recommendations of the study to the school and parent groups involved in school. The findings and recommendations will also be sent the Inclusive Education Forum Western Cape and other interested parties known to the researcher

6.2 Conclusion

To conclude, the majority of the findings from this research study supported previous results regarding the inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities into mainstream schools as laid out in the literature review. In this context there were some specific findings identified which related to intellectual disabilities and the high school experience. These findings warrant further research into the area of inclusive

education within the South African context. By in large the school in this study proved to have a positive attitude, embracing those learners with intellectual disabilities and inclusion as a whole. The Special Education Unit is progressive in the overall development of its learners with intellectual disabilities. It is encouraging to see that they are working towards facilitating these learners entering society a large, which is inline with the social model of disability. With regards to this emphasis is placed almost entirely on developing social and vocational skills as opposed to academic results. The strength of each learner is taken into account. Parents of children with intellectual disabilities at the school that were involved in this study have come along way in terms of the education and inclusion of their children at mainstream schools. They have gathered a wealth of knowledge and experience and have a lot to offer in terms of insight pertaining to inclusive education practices.

An important finding was the integral role of facilitators in the inclusion process. They were a key factor to the success of the inclusion programme run at the school. They could also be used as a resource of knowledge to gain understanding in the specific area of inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities.

To conclude, the teachers, parents and facilitators have all worked together as a team to bring out the full potential of the learners with intellectual disabilities attending the Special Education Unit, and have been successful in doing so.

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ADDENDUM A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Interview schedules for:

1. Parents
2. Teachers
3. Facilitators

1. Parents

- What has been your experiences from the time your child has been in junior school up until now?
- Probing question: What differences have you experienced?
- Probing question: How did you cope with that?
- Probing question: Are there any other experiences with regard to the environment, teachers, facilitators, other learners, your involvement?
- Concluding question: is there anything you would like to share with regard to the experiences of inclusive education and your child's life in the school?

2. Teachers

- What have your experiences been regarding learners with intellectual disabilities entering the high school scenario?
- Probing question: what differences have you experienced between them and mainstream learners?
- Probing question: what challenges have you experienced in teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?
- Probing question: how have you coped with that?
- Probing question: Are there any other experiences with regard to the environment, parents, facilitators, other learners, your involvement?

- Concluding question: is there anything you would like to share with regard to the experiences of inclusive education and the inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities in the school?

3. Facilitators

- What have your experiences been regarding learners with intellectual disabilities entering the high school scenario?
- Probing question: what differences have you experienced between primary and high school scenario?
- Probing question: what challenges have you experienced in facilitating learners with intellectual disabilities?
- Probing question: how have you coped with that?
- Probing question: Are there any other experiences with regard to the environment, parents, teachers, other learners, your involvement?
- Concluding question: is there anything you would like to share with regard to the experiences of inclusive education and the inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities in the high school?

ADDENDUM B: LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear ...

I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town. I am currently conducting research on pupils with intellectual impairments attending high school. I am particularly interested in the new challenges faced by their parents, facilitators and teachers in the transition phase from primary school to high school. This study will help professionals in the field to better understand the issues faced by teachers and parents of pupils with intellectual impairments as these pupils enter into the high school environment

You will be requested to partake in an interview lasting approximately 1 – 2 hours. In the interview for parents I will ask about how your experiences of your child being in high school have differed from when they were in primary school. I will also focus on differing attitudes towards their disability, as well as your relationships with their teachers, in the high school scenario. In the interview for teachers I will ask about how your experiences/challenges in teaching students with intellectual impairments and also your relationships with their parents. In the interview for facilitators I will ask about the differences you have experienced between primary and high school regarding the pupils' disability both in and out of the classroom.

With your permission, I will tape record the interviews to ensure that the information is recorded accurately. You may refuse to have the interview recorded and may request to switch off the tape at any time or remove any data from the tape. Your identity and personal information will be kept entirely confidential and will not be included in any written reports. The results of the study will be written in the form of a Masters thesis and may be published in a scientific journal.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time.

Should you have any further questions regarding the research, please don't hesitate to contact me.

My contact details:

Telephone: 788 2853

Cell: 072 609 0080

Email: vic4marina@yahoo.com

Yours sincerely,

Vic McKinney

University of Cape Town

ADDENDUM C: ETHICS APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Health Sciences Faculty
Research Ethics Committee
Room E53-24 Grootte Schuur Hospital Old Main Building
Observatory 7925
Telephone [021] 406 6338 • Facsimile [021] 406 6411
e-mail: preaward@curie.uct.ac.za

27 October 2005

REC REF: 393/2005

Mr VJ McKinney
Health & Rehabilitation Sciences

Dear Mr McKinney

PROJECT TITLE: CHALLENGES FACING PARENTS AND TEACHERS OF PUPILS WITH INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENTS ATTENDING SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Thank you for submitting your study to the Research Ethics Committee for review.

It is a pleasure to inform you that the Ethics Committee has **formally approved** the above-mentioned study on the 24 October 2005.

Please quote the REC. REF in all your correspondence.

Yours sincerely

PROF. T. ZABOW
CHAIRPERSON