

**How do Teachers Position Themselves within Socially
Constructed Discourses of Disability and Inclusion?
A Case Study at a Semi-rural Township School in
KwaZulu-Natal**

By

EDWARD JABULANI NGCOBO

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Nonhlanhla, and my daughters, Thobeka, Nqobile and Unathi who allowed me time and served as constant inspiration to work towards the completion of this work.

and

My beloved mother, Thembekile, who taught me the value of education.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Edward Jabulani Ngcobo, declare that the work contained herein has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution and that unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is the original work of the writer.



EJ Ngcobo

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Professor A. Muthukrishna (Supervisor)

ABSTRACT

Since a democratic dispensation in South Africa in 1994, the country has been immersed in processes of social, economic, political, and educational transformation aimed at entrenching principles of social justice and inclusion by foregrounding issues of equity, redress, quality education for all, equality of opportunity, and non-discrimination. The purpose of the current study was to listen to how teachers position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion in a mainstream setting that has integrated disabled learners. It further attempted to address the challenge of understanding ways in which teachers' constructions of their experiences of inclusion of disabled learners shape their professional lives, beliefs, and practices; and to interrogate contradictions, contestations and tensions embedded in these dominant discourses. In essence, the study sought to analyze the interactional dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The research was conducted within a qualitative research paradigm, and took the form of a small-scale case study. The data collection techniques included in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Findings of the study revealed that teachers positioned themselves within discursive limits of dominant discourses. This was evident in how they constructed disabled learners as not meeting some pre-established standard of the discourse of normalcy. There was also evidence of policy-practice tensions in the voices of teachers regarding support provision and delivery of a 'curriculum for all'. It can be concluded that although significant steps had been taken to include disabled learners, most of these arrangements were still located within the limits of dominant discourses of deficiency, deficit and pathology. The findings point to the fact that, in essence, the education system does not examine the ideological, political, and economic "needs" of learners with disability within the context of inclusion. This supports the arguments put forth by Sayed (2002) that inclusion and exclusion are not simply bipolar processes. Inclusion in itself presents problems of co-option and control and does not imply that people are not excluded. The act of inclusion begs the question of what the included have become included in, on whose terms, and what new exclusions the act of inclusion presents for them.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Anatomy and physiology of an education institution: the ideological, social, economic and political workings of an education institution.

Apartheid: former official policy in South Africa of discriminating against and keeping apart people on the basis of their racial identities by the enactment of law of parliament.

Barriers to learning and participation: factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diverse learning needs, which often leads to learning breakdown or which prevent learners from accessing educational provision.

Care-giver: any person other than a parent or guardian, who factually cares for a child.

Child: a person under the age of eighteen years.

Compulsory education: education that should be received by a learner from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever comes first.

Constitution: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.

Curriculum: According to the framework of Curriculum 2005, the curriculum can be defined as everything that influences the learner, from teachers and their work programmes, right down to the environment in which processes of learning and teaching take place.

Departmental official: any person employed by the Department of Education to provide or facilitate support for schools in order to make it possible for them to provide quality education for all learners.

Disability: the limitation imposed on a person regarding carrying out an activity in a way which can be considered normal; this limitation is not a feature of the individual but is created in the surroundings, that is, socially constructed – its demands, expectations and attitudes.

District: a geographical unit as determined by the relevant provincial legislation, or prevailing provincial practice.

Education institution: any institution providing education, whether early childhood education, primary, secondary, further or higher education, and also an institution providing specialized, vocational, adult, distance or community education.

Full-service school: an ordinary school which is especially equipped to address a full range of barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting. In addition to their ordinary learner population, it is accessible to most learners in an area who experience barriers to learning and provide necessary support.

Grade: that part of an educational programme which a learner may complete in one school year.

Guardian: a parent or other person who has the legal guardianship of a child.

Identity: the image of the self shaped primarily by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political factors.

Impairment: loss of or somewhat lack in psychological, physiological or anatomical structures or functions in a person.

Independent school: any school established and maintained by any person(s) at their own cost; the school is registered or deemed to be registered in terms of section 46 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Learner: any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Learning breakdown: happens when effective learning does not occur, and when the ideal process of learning and teaching is not sustained.

Mainstream school: a school where all or the majority of learners are non-disabled.

Means of control: the relative amount of power to determine your own existence or life. When used in conjunction with identity theory, for example, the means of control would determine the extent to which one is able to *define oneself* as opposed to *being defined* within the limits of the dominant discourse.

Member of staff: a person employed at a school.

M+3: Matric plus three years of professional training.

M+4: Matric plus four years of professional training.

Non-educator staff: members of staff employed in a school for activities other than teaching.

Over-age learners: learners who, in terms of the requirements of the conditions for admission, as contained in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, are above the recommended age in a grade.

Parent: the person legally entitled to custody of a learner/child.

Principal: a teacher appointed or acting as the head of a school.

Province: any one of the nine provinces established under section 124 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996.

Regular learner: an ordinary/non-disabled pupil or student who is taught or trained by a teacher at a mainstream school.

Regular teacher: any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or provides professional therapy at a mainstream school.

Social exclusion: a process of long-term non-participation in any social, political, economic systems that integrate society in which an individual resides.

Special school: a school equipped to deliver education to disabled learners on a full-time or part-time basis.

Vulnerable groups: disabled persons, out-of-school youth, working children, ethnic and linguistic minorities, street children, illiterate women, rural communities, squatter communities, communities affected by violence, conflict, HIV and AIDS, hunger, poor health, and others.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

For decades, throughout the world disabled children and many others who experience a range of barriers to learning have traditionally been excluded from or marginalised within schools (Ainscow & Haile-Giorgis, 1998). These may include children who are already enrolled in education but for a range of reasons do not achieve adequately, those who are not enrolled in schools but who could participate if schools were more flexible in their responses toward them, and the relatively small group of children with more severe impairments who may have a need for some form of additional support.

It is a universally recognized fact that the prime objective of any education system in a society governed by the democratic ethos should be the provision of quality education to all learners so as to enable them to realise their full potential, rendering them able to meaningfully contribute to and participate in that society throughout their lives. This calls for the education system to ensure that the right to education is upheld as a fundamental constitutional right, and that it sets up systems and mechanisms to ensure the creation of equal opportunities in the education provision for effective learning by all learners irrespective of their differences. Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) asserts the right of every child to education and requires that this should be provided for on the basis of equality of opportunity. 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, ethnic origin, religion, language, gender, race, capabilities, sex, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, and so on.

The major challenge for any country engaged in an effort to realize this imperative ambition is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All (EFA) as an inclusive concept is reflected in all government policies. Education for All "... must take cognisance of the needs of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural

dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health and disabled persons ...". (Expanded commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action, 2000, par 19).

It is recognised that current strategies and programmes have largely been insufficient and/or inappropriate with regard to meeting the needs of children and youth who are vulnerable to marginalisation and social exclusion. Where programmes targeting various marginalized and excluded groups do exist, they have functioned outside the mainstream – special programmes, specialized institutions, and specialist educators. Notwithstanding the best intentions, too often the result has been social exclusion, 'second-rate' educational opportunities that do not guarantee the possibility to continue studies, or differentiation, becoming yet another form of discrimination, leaving children with various needs outside the mainstream of school life and later, as adults, outside community social and cultural life in general (UNESCO, 1999).

Despite encouraging developments there are still an estimated 113 million primary school going children not attending school (International Consultative Forum on Education for All, 2000). Ninety percent of them live in low and lower middle income countries, and over 80 million of children out-of-school lives in Africa, and of those who do enrol primary school, large numbers drop out before completing their primary education (UNESCO, 2001). Reasons for this wastage are numerous, but there is also an emerging understanding that this could partly be attributed to the fact that our education systems lack the capacity, for a myriad of reasons, to adequately accommodate the diversity of needs of the learner population. As a response to this challenge, there have been encouraging developments in Southern Africa in setting up inclusive systems of education, aiming at meeting the needs of all learners irrespective of their differences within the mainstream of education (UNESCO, 2002). These developments have been made visible in various ways: for instance, the 18th Conference of the Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity, held in Nairobi, Kenya, on the 27th June 1981, adopted the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of

African Unity, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 1990, adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the African Union declared the first decade of the new millennium as the African Decade of Disabled People. This decade will be marked by a process of designing and implementing programmes for the development of disabled people in Africa.

In line with the international trend of ensuring the provision of quality education within the mainstream of education, South Africa has made significant strides towards the realization of this goal. For the past ten years, South Africa has paid diligent attention to the fact that institutions of learning need to introspect and reflect on their roles and experiences in terms of what they are offering their learners and whether it meets the diverse range of needs of the learner population.

South Africa did not participate in the Jomtien World Conference in 1990 because of its international isolation due to its apartheid policies. After its first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa was invited to participate in the Education for All (EFA) processes, and was welcomed at the Mid-decade Review on Education for All (EFA) which was held in Amman, Jordan, in 1996. South Africa has, as a result, embraced the EFA principles, goals, targets and guidelines contained in both the Declaration and the Framework for Action. The ongoing transformation in South Africa has brought about numerous educational issues into sharp focus, resulting in the development of many new laws, policies and practices. Since 1994, when the new democratic government came into power, South Africa has engaged in far-reaching and fundamental education reforms, thereby breaking decisively with the apartheid past. This, South Africa has demonstrated in that all its education policies, programmes and legislation that have emerged accentuate principles of social justice, quality education for all, the right to basic education, equality of opportunity, and redress of past educational disparities. This is indicative of political will to facilitate the transformation of the education system of South Africa.

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996* is billed as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, and codifies and safeguards the rights of all citizens. It reflects the struggles faced by the majority of South Africans and, consequently, to that effect comprises a Bill of Rights which ensconces the right of all learners, irrespective of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth, to basic education and equal access to educational institutions (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This section of the Constitution recognizes 16 different identities, with the intention of including them all constitutionally in the workings of the South African society (Carrim, 2002). The Bill of Rights lists equality as a substantive right, which, together with principles of human dignity and freedom, influences the interpretation of all other rights in the Bill of Rights. The Constitution is founded on the fundamental values of equality, freedom and non-racism. All the subsequent education legislation and policies are founded on the Constitution, and accordingly recognize diversity and the provision of quality education for all learners within a non-segregated education system. These laws and policies provide a framework for the process of building an inclusive education and training system and are the 'initial strides towards inclusive education' in South Africa (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997).

The *White Paper on Education and Training of 1995* (Department of Education, 1995) situates a particular importance on redressing educational inequalities amongst people who suffered particular injustices and all vulnerable groups including disabled persons. The *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* (Department of Education, 1996), which replaced Education Acts of the apartheid regime, stresses the need for all public schools to provide quality education for all learners regardless of their difference: "a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way" (Department of Education, 1996:2A-6). An overarching policy in South Africa on disability issues is the *White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy of 1997* (Office of the Deputy President, 1997) which acknowledges the fact that a human rights and development approach to disability has significant implications for the way in which education is provided in South Africa. This policy provides a blueprint for integration and inclusion of disability issues into

every aspect of governance. Most centrally, it articulates a paradigm shift from dealing with disability related issues as solely health and welfare issues to a rights-based integrated approach. *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System of 2001* (Department of Education, 2001) outlines what an inclusive education and training system is, and how the Education Ministry intends to build it. It also spells out a new categorizing principle: that of categorizing using the level of support required rather than by a form of disability. This is a landmark policy paper which, as the Minister of Education points out, would cut our ties with the past and recognise the vital contribution that disabled people, in particular, are making and must continue to make, but as part of and not isolated from the flowering of our nation (Department of Education, 2001). This legislative framework in South African education underscores the removal of disparities in education which seeks to equalize educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality and access so far. With the above, it is clear that there are discernable attempts, in terms of the policy framework, at 'operationalizing the comprehensive inclusivity' (Carrim, 2002) contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Furthermore, at an international level, South Africa has ratified a number of International Conventions that directly and/or indirectly protect the rights of disabled people, for instance, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Convention against Discrimination in Education, to name but a few. The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities has certainly been useful as a tool in assisting the process of policy making in South Africa (McClain, 2002).

However, South Africa still faces major challenges in making a clean break with the legacy of the apartheid past, despite all these developments it has instituted to redress the imbalances and injustices of the past. In pursuing the process of confronting this legacy, in 1997 the Minister and the Department of Education appointed the National Commission

on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of 'special needs and support services' in education and training in South Africa. In terms of the NCSNET/NCESS Report (Department of Education, 1997), the history of education for learners with disabilities in South Africa, like much of the history of our country, reflects massive deprivation and lack of provision for the majority of people. These inequities could be directly attributed to social, economic and political factors that featured in the history of South African society during the years of apartheid. These factors had an adverse impact on educational opportunities for many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The highly inefficient and fragmented educational bureaucracy excluded and marginalised these learners from the mainstream of education provision, through entrenching inequalities by institutionalising racial segregation, labeling disabled learners and separating them from their peers in mainstream schools.

The inequities in the racially determined provision of education for disabled learners, in particular, were exacerbated with the implementation in 1948 of the policy of separate development. The institutionalized apartheid in every aspect of South African life had a significant impact on the area of special needs education. The establishment of the homeland system, the promulgation of Bantu Education Act (1953), the Indian Education Act (1965) and the Coloured Persons Education Act (1963) all entrenched racial disparities and contributed to the massive inequalities and deprivation in educational provision which featured prominently in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) Report of 1992.

The divisions in the education system were also reinforced during the apartheid order by separate education departments being governed by different legislation. The area of special education was doubly fragmented – on the one hand, by legislation and policy which enforced separation along racial lines and on the other, by a separation between 'ordinary' learners in the mainstream system and learners with 'special needs' in a secondary system. The dual nature of the education system has resulted in disparities in provision in special

schools and mainstream schools, with special schools being relatively well-resourced and mainstream schools, most predominantly black and rural, grossly neglected. In terms of *Education Statistics in South Africa at a Glance in 2002* (Department of Education, 2004), there are 370 special schools and 27 647 ordinary public and independent schools in South Africa. Of every 200 learners in the education system in South Africa, 172 are in ordinary public schools and 4 are in ordinary independent schools, and only 1 is in a special school. Although South Africa has taken giant strides towards the development of an inclusive education and training system, the traces of the previous system are still prevalent as special education still exists as an elaborate second system which serves a small minority of learners. Provision in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal remains largely inadequate in terms of services and resources for black disabled children particularly in rural areas. Due to the formerly racially segregated history of education in South Africa, such provision is either grossly lacking or non-existent (Kriegler and Farman, 1994). So, South Africa, after more than a decade of democratic governance, still faces this legacy waiting to be addressed. If the new policy of inclusive education is to be implemented successfully, South Africa will need to face up to these challenges and act decisively to address such disparities.

In addition to the above, the National School Register of Needs 2000 Survey (Department of Education, 2000) reveals that, although significant strides have been made since mid-1990s in improving physical resources in schools, there are many schools, particularly those in the historically deprived contexts, which are still grossly under-resourced. There are still many schools without power supply. There are still huge provincial variations in access to telecommunications infrastructure with Eastern Cape, Northern Province and KwaZulu-Natal lagging behind Western Cape and Gauteng provinces. 16,6 % of learners (1.9 million) are without sanitation facilities, and the learner: toilet ratio still stands at 35:1. Although backlogs have been vigorously addressed particularly in the rural provinces, an enormous number of schools still do not have classrooms, administration blocks or staffrooms. Many are still without libraries, science laboratories and halls. In 2000, schools that reported weak and very weak buildings increased from 4 377 in 1996 to 9 375 in 2000. This decline in

schools with excellent and good buildings could be attributed to the insufficient investment in infrastructure maintenance (Department of Education, 2000).

The impact of the prevailing socio-economic conditions in South Africa is also visible in a number of faces. For instance, South Africa is one of the countries most affected by HIV and AIDS, with 5 million living with HIV. Twenty percent of the 15-49 year old population is living with HIV, and in parts of the country more than 35% of women of childbearing age are living with HIV and AIDS. Overall 12% of the population is infected. About 1700 new infections occur each day, and approximately 40% of deaths are believed to be AIDS-related. There are approximately 660 000 children who have lost one or both parents, and it is predicted that by 2008, 1.6 million children will have been orphaned by AIDS. Without effective prevention and treatment, 5-7 million cumulative AIDS deaths are anticipated by 2010, and there will be over 1 million people sick with AIDS. The epidemic could cost South Africa as much as 17% in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2010. The extraction industries, education and health are among the sectors that will be severely affected.

In South Africa, inclusion of disabled children is now an open option to parents, yet the country still faces stark realities as outlined above. Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (Department of Education, 2001) has legislated that placement in mainstream schools be an option for children with disabilities. This is accurately captured in the following clause:

“1.3.7 In an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services will be created in line with what learners with disabilities require. This means that learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools and those requiring moderate support will receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools.”
(Department of Education, 2001:15)

However, research conducted by the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services

(NCESS) (Department of Education, 1997) indicate that despite the introduction of compulsory education, through the South African Schools Act (Department of Education, 1996) and other legislation, by the democratic government, there is still a mismatch between policy and practice as many disabled children still remain excluded from formal education (many of them still in community-run daycare centres without appropriate educational provision), and that teachers often respond negatively to the inclusion of a disabled child in the classroom, and that disabled learners are not valued in the school environment. To add salt to the already painful wound, there are other issues that teachers have to face everyday of their work. For instance, in terms of the National School Register of Needs 2000 Survey (Department of Education, 2000), the national average learner: educator ratio remained unchanged between 1996 and 2000 (32:1), although changes were noted in some provinces. Since 1996, the decline in enrolment of 2.3% and a decline in educator numbers of 1.3% have contributed to the stability of this ratio. However, there were provinces whose learner: educator ratio far exceeded the national average. For instance, the highest learner: educator ratio was reported in provinces such as Mpumalanga (39:1) and KwaZulu-Natal (38:1). In addition to this, independent schools were found to have a learner: educator ratio of 15:1, seventeen points lower than that of public schools of 32:1. This is one of the indications of the fact that educational change is not simply a matter of redrafting legislation and restructuring services. The complexity of educational reform requires a more systematic and considered approach to the process of implementing change which targets both the culture and processes of organisational arrangements (Ball, 1987; Fullan, 1990 cited in Ainscow, 1991).

Another reality which further complicates the feasibility of this open option parents of disabled children have in terms of which school they would like their children to go to is the history of education provision and support for disabled learners. For instance, the responsibility of providing for disabled learners in South Africa has traditionally been located within the Psychological, Guidance and Special Education Services (PGSES) Directorate. Despite Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) indicating a paradigm to the contrary, this seems to continue to be the thinking within many education

circles. This in spite of the fact that this Directorate is experiencing severe staff constraints. For instance, *The Implementation of Inclusive Education: A Discussion Document 2005* (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2005) indicates that out of 240 posts allocated to this Directorate in the districts of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, only 136 have been successfully filled. Many districts are still operating on skeleton staff. The large number of vacancies and the scattering in the distribution of specialist staff, indicate that PGSES within districts are operating with personnel who currently do not have the appropriate theoretical knowledge, as well as professional expertise to attend to the requests for specialist intervention. Furthermore, in determining the staff allocated to districts a flat structure was allocated across the province. To what extent contextual realities and redress served as factors in determining the structure seems unclear.

Undoubtedly, this is a portion of the price that South Africa has to pay as a developing context.

The current study listens to the voices of teachers on how they position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion in a mainstream setting that has integrated disabled learners. It further attempts to address the challenge of how teachers' constructions of their experiences of inclusion of disabled learners shape their professional lives, beliefs, and practices; and interrogates the contradictions, contestations and tensions embedded in these dominant discourses. In essence, the study seeks to analyze the interactional dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Peters (1993) contends that, if at all possible, education should be the door to opportunity, the means to provide the opportunity for freedom of choice between a lifetime of dependence and a lifetime of independent living. However, the education of most disabled learners often hardly unfolds to meet this expectation.

2.2 The dominant discourse

The dominant perspective concerning the education of disabled learners has been the one that sees educational difficulty as emanating largely from the limitations within the learner (Ainscow, 1991), that is, the situation has been that the learner is being perceived as having something wrong – a deficiency - within them that requires pathological attention. According to this view, it follows that in order to help the learner we need to find out as much as we possibly can about the nature of these difficulties by means of the child's strengths and weaknesses, to make a 'diagnosis' (Mittler, 2000) where possible and to plan an intervention programme and support based on such analysis. The principal aim here is to help the child to fit into the existing anatomy and physiology of an educational institution, and to benefit from what the school has to offer, which masks causal factors arising from the larger social, political and organisational processes that are external to the individual (Skrtic, 1987). As explained via a UNESCO contribution at a recent Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) Conference:

“... the issues, challenges and the process of learning are now focused on the 'individuals' and far less on the 'system'. In this respect, it is amazing to note that for very different reasons, the 'individuals' are the targets of economists, educators and political protagonists ... Educators believe that it is the learner who ultimately determines the construction of knowledge, on pedagogical grounds ...”

(Hallack, 1999:11)

Consequently, within this view there are no systemic adaptations that are established to accommodate the interests of the learner who is experiencing educational difficulty. Cultural, structural and curricular aspects of the learning institution remain largely uninterrogated, since they are assumed to be appropriate for the great majority of learners – there is no assumption that the education institution needs to change in any way to accommodate the needs of any particular child or to respond to a wider range of needs in its learner population. In essence, schooling does not examine the ideological, political, and economic “needs” of a society (Peters, 1993).

Literature suggests that this discourse works to the disadvantage of disabled learners. Its negative consequences are, *inter alia*, the following: 1) The segregation process and inevitable labeling with which it is associated have negative effects upon the attitudes and expectations of learners, teachers and parents (Ainscow, 1991); 2) Educationalists are encouraged to regard educational development as having limits with certain categories of learners and the search for solutions is focused on individual deficits rather than on the inequitable, repressive structure and functioning of the educational institution (Drudy & Lynch, 1993), which is often based on the images of the dominant culture, and as a result imposing on and marginalizing subordinate cultures; 3) The presence of designated specialists encourages teachers to pass on to others responsibility for children they regard as being special (Ainscow, 1991), and to internalize and reinforce the fact that they lack power to negotiate their own situation; 4) The clinical discourses operate within the parameters of the dominant culture of various professionals, and the particular interests of the professionals often bear little or no relation to the interests of disabled children (McDonnell, 1992). Often the power relations are unequal, with disabled learners and their parents, caregivers or guardians relegated to the weakest position and being unable to ensure that their interests receive priority (Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2000), due to the constraints exerted by the prevailing order of reason and sets of discursive limits within which they have to function (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000); 5) The nature of the educational experiences provided is often characterised by narrowness of opportunity and

low levels of achievement and expectation (Ainscow, 1991) for those whose discourses are relegated to the margins.

Fulcher (1989) claims that the medical model pervades education, thereby individualizing problems and developing solutions based on the application of professional expertise, as it “individualizes disability, in the sense that it suggests that individuals have diseases, problems or incapacity as attributes” (Fulcher, 1989:27). That is, it objectifies disability as an innate individual tragedy, and lacks consciousness of the ways in which social and political forces shape individuals. Very little attention, if any, is focused on the social structures, relations and processes that shape the experiences of individuals.

There is another problem inherent in failing to interrogate social and political factors that continue to reinforce notions based on ‘blaming the victim’. This situation provides a fertile ground for reinforcement and maintenance of the rules of the culture of those who have more access to power. When an absence of cross-pollination of discourses of the mainstream and discourses of the margins dominates the manner in which school affairs are being conducted, success becomes defined by the rules of the dominant group. Here, success generally has to do with conforming to and assuming the culture of those who have more access to forms of capital. This results in a situation where certain social groups will have an easier time at school, because their domestic culture is reinforced by that of the school. For instance, able-bodied children are sent to school with all the accoutrements of the culture of power, while disabled children from other kinds of families operate within perfectly wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes or rules of power (Delpit, 1997). So, disabled learners have very few or no chances of experiencing success, because success is defined in terms and conditions that are foreign to their own culture.

Mittler (2000) warns, though, that it is important to note that although the defect model *per se* is rejected as a single explanation, it remains highly influential and profoundly affects policy, practice and attitudes. Its impact is brightly reflected in the views of many

professionals, teachers, policymakers and parents, which signifies that it is still entrenched in the general consciousness of almost everyone who works in education. This reflects a challenge that it is not going to 'go away' merely because academics and activists, or those that suffer the harmful effects of being excluded and marginalized by it, argue that it is out of date and discriminatory. Such prevalence and persistence could be attributed to the fact that education is a terrain of struggle, power and contestation.

2.3 The alternative discourse

The alternative perspective is primarily a product of the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), which calls on governments to adopt the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling grounds for doing otherwise. The premise here is that each and every child, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, social class, ability or disability, race, sex, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, language, culture has the basic right to be educated in the regular classroom. This position puts into question the fact that disabled children continue being denied access to particular schools, and that dominant cultures at schools still continue to alienate certain categories of learners. The notion of inclusive education here is not about serving disabled children within general education settings (Mittler, 2000), but is viewed more comprehensively as a reform strategy that responds to a diversity of needs amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001). This implies, therefore, in terms of the schooling system, a progressive extension of the capacity of mainstream schools to provide for children with a wide variety of needs, including those who are disabled. As Barton argues:

“Inclusive education is not integration and is not concerned with the assimilation or accommodation of discriminated groups or individuals within existing socio-economic conditions and relations. It is not about making people as ‘normal’ as possible. Nor is it about the well-being of a particular oppressed or excluded group. Thus, the concerns go well beyond those of disablement. Inclusive education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end – the creation and maintenance of an inclusive society. As such, the interest is with all citizens, their well-being and security. This is a radical conception ... It is

ultimately about the transformation of a society and its formal institutional arrangements, such as education. This means change in the values, priorities and policies that support and perpetuate practices of exclusion and discrimination.”

(Barton, 1999:58)

This conception of inclusion involves a radical rethink of policy, practice and attitudes, and reflects a fundamentally different way of thinking about the origins of learning difficulties. This rethink implies a shift from a pathological assumption, individual deficit and institutional discrimination (Naicker, 2000) to a ‘social rights framework’.

The social rights framework is founded on the paradigm that it is society and its institutions that are oppressive, discriminatory and disabling, and that attention needs to be placed on challenging and removing all obstacles or barriers to the participation of all citizens in the mainstream of life of society, and in changing institutions – structurally and culturally - regulations and attitudes that create and maintain exclusion (Campbell & Oliver, 1996). It reflects as its main feature an egalitarian principle, which affords disabled people, and other marginalized groups, recognition to be the primary sources of information about questions that affect their lives and especially about the particular needs and difficulties experienced by them in the education system (Armstrong *et al*, 2000). In this context, the reformation, restructuring and reculturing of the school as a whole, with the aim of ensuring that all learners can have access to the whole range of educational and social opportunities offered by the school, is a reflection of the social rights archetype in action (Mittler, 2000).

South Africa has, since 1989, been deeply engaged in the activity of establishing a society founded on democratic values, social justice, social inclusion and basic human rights. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996) blatantly outlaws all forms of discrimination, which could arise on the basis of one or more of the following identities: disability, gender, race, sex, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, age, sexual orientation, language, etc. All subsequent legislation and policies now exist to advance and give voice to the spirit of the constitution. South Africa has ratified various

regional and international instruments (declarations and conventions). The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa gives voice to these instruments.

In 1997, the Minister of Education established the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), whose brief was to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of “special needs and support services” in education and training in South Africa. In terms of the Report of the NCSNET and the NCESS, the close relationship that exists between ‘special needs and support’ prompted the two bodies to undertake a joint investigation which focused on the challenge to the entire education system to address the diverse needs of the learner population (Department of Education, 1997).

This report gave birth to a rethink of the concept of ‘special needs education’. The report pointed out the limitations inherent in the medical discourse of special needs education (Department of Education, 1997). The argument of the report was that ‘special needs education’ and ‘social inclusion’ need to go beyond disability concerns as its defining feature, and that the issue of disability must be located alongside all forms of oppression within a human rights framework. This was a necessary shift that would expose the fact that factors of disability, race, gender, class, language, etc. all intersect and interrelate in ways that produce unique and peculiar individual experiences (Anderson & Collins, 1998).

The Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Commission on Education Support Services (NCESS): Quality Education for All (Department of Education, 1997) refers to barriers that can be located within the learner, within the learning site, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context, and which manifest themselves in different ways and only become obvious when learning breakdown occurs, when learners ‘drop out’ of the system or when the excluded become visible.

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001), which emerged from the NCSNET and NCESS process, also identifies a range of barriers to learning, which prevent both the learner and system needs being satisfied and can lead to all sorts of difficulties, including learning breakdown and exclusion from the educational provision. The major shift here is redeployment of focus from concerns with supporting the rights of learners with impairments to a focus on mobilizing support for all learners vulnerable to exclusion and to exclusionary pressures within society. This would include children who are denied access to schooling; those who have access to schooling but experience barriers to learning; those who live in conditions of poverty; children living and affected with HIV and AIDS; those who live with burdens of disability and disease, sexual exploitation, family breakdown, unemployment, crime infested environments, exploitative and child labour, and limited educational life chances. Within this shift, there is an inherent emphasis on equity, equal access, entitlement, quality, and participation for all.

Furthermore, Education White Paper 6, instead of being confined to disability, uses the term “barriers to learning and participation” – and underlines the necessity to minimize barriers and maximize participation. Key barriers identified in Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) include: negative attitudes to and stereotyping of difference; an inflexible curriculum; inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching; inappropriate communication; inaccessible and unsafe built environments; inappropriate and inadequate support services; inadequate policies and legislation; the non-recognition and non-involvement of parents; inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators.

However, some literature contend that it is important to avoid polarizing these frameworks as though they are mutually incompatible (Mittler, 2000; Marks, 1999), rather they need to be thought of as being in a state of constant and complex interaction. In his argument, Marks (1999) raises the fact that there is no reason why a within-child model must necessarily be incompatible with a social rights model, as their co-operation and co-

existence may be in the interests of the child. For instance, he argues, some aspects of the 'within-child' framework are clearly relevant, particularly for children whose difficulties arise in large measure from major impairments of sensory organs or the central nervous system, but that these impairments, however severe, in no way explain all their difficulties, and there is plenty of scope for environmental interventions at a variety of levels: teaching, parenting, peer supports and friendships, positive attitudes from teachers and neighbours, and removal of barriers of all kinds.

2.4 Teachers' experiences of inclusion

Numerous studies have been conducted both locally and internationally regarding the teachers' voices on the concept of inclusion, and how they experience the inclusion and exclusion of disabled learners. These studies have largely sought to measure the attitudes of teachers to inclusion (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Bothma, Gravett & Swart, 2000; Hay, Paulsen & Smit, 2001; Kuester, 2000; Kochhar, West & Taymans, 2000; Soto & Goetz, 1998; Brownell & Pajares, 1999; Buell, Hallam & Gamel-McCormick, 1999). One of the most interesting observations that could be made about literature on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of disabled learners is that there is no discernible relationship between the year in which the research was carried out and teachers' attitudes. That is, teachers' attitudes have not changed considerably over the last thirty years despite all the historical changes in policy (Fox, 2003). What, however, is notable is that a positive attitude towards the inclusion of disabled learners is greater the further away the person is from the day-to-day responsibility for delivering it (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989). So, while policy-makers, administrators and university academics have increasingly argued for inclusion, teachers' views about inclusion have remained largely sceptical (Fox, 2003). However, such attitudes are reported to often change once teachers have had the direct experience of including disabled children in their classrooms (Mittler, 2000).

A review of literature on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion reveals that there are numerous factors, which account for the attitudes of teachers (Engelbrecht, Eloff & Newmark, 1997:82; Hegarty, 1994:125; Vlachou & Barton, 1994:107; Janney, Snell, Beers &

Raynes, 1995 cited in Bothma *et al.*, 2000). Amongst other variables, teachers' attitudes may be negative for numerous reasons (Bothma, Gravett, & Swart, 2000): Firstly, teachers often feel that they are obliged to implement policies about which they were not properly consulted. Secondly, teachers often do not have a clear understanding of the demands of changes they must implement and often lack adequate time to prepare for implementation. Thirdly, many lack confidence in their own abilities to teach learners with diverse needs; they fear failure and claim to be concerned about the needs of regular learners in their classes. Lastly, teachers' attitudes are influenced by past experiences of teaching disabled learners, availability and provision of sufficient support and resources, the burden of teacher responsibility and the amount of time required of the teacher to address the needs of a diverse population of learners.

Regular teachers raise numerous concerns regarding the inclusion of disabled learners in their classrooms (Bothma *et al.*, 2000); concerns are usually a manifestation of their own misunderstandings, insecurities and prejudices regarding disability and inclusion. Firstly, teachers are generally concerned with the emotional effects that inclusion would have on the included disabled learners. The view that disabled learners may develop low self-esteem due to repeated failure in regular education and that they cannot keep up with their peers. Secondly, teachers are very concerned about the 'normal' learner in their classroom. The general sentiment appears to be that a regular learner in the system would be neglected, due to the teacher's time and effort being dedicated to the disabled learners in the class. This is often linked to a fear that standards would drop due to the neglect of the regular learners, in order to accommodate disabled learners. Lastly, teachers feel that it is not fair to expect the regular learners to support and carry the disabled learner, when their focus should be on their own education, portraying disabled learners as helpless, fragile and incapable.

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the inclusion of disabled are of critical importance as they underpin their own professional practice (Fox, 2003). If there has to be an impact in changing teachers' practice towards the inclusion of disabled learners in mainstream classrooms, then it should be preceded by a change in attitudes and beliefs of teachers

about the participation of disabled learners in the ordinary classes. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are often founded from their own personal experiences, and on how others, particularly their significant others, including the principal, senior teachers and other influential staff members, see and talk about inclusion. Consequently, the attitudes and beliefs teachers hold about the inclusion of disabled learners in mainstream classes are moulded not only by teachers' own personal dispositions, but also by how their significant others see and talk about inclusion (Fox, 2003).

South African literature indicates congruency with international trends with regard to teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of disabled learners in mainstream schools. The findings of an investigation conducted during the early part of 2000, involving all student teachers enrolled for the Further Diploma in Education (Special Educational Needs) at Vista University, as well as a sample of teachers in Southern Gauteng Province not studying the cited diploma (Van der Merwe, 2000) suggested that those teachers studying in the special needs field had apparently made the paradigm shift towards inclusion, but the same could hardly be said of regular teachers. This sends a sharp signal that policy makers and education managers cannot take it for granted that inclusion will be embraced by regular classroom teachers, and also indicates that the major barrier to inclusion lies in teachers' perceptions that "special children" are different and that the task of educating them requires special expertise, special equipment, special training and special schools (Forlin, 1995). Teacher perceptions and attitudes are obviously fundamental to their response to new policies on inclusion (Mittler, 2000).

Literature, both international and local, also reveals that inclusion makes additional demands on teachers, and that teachers' sense of efficacy in including disabled learners in mainstream classrooms plays a defining role in the success of an inclusive educational policy (Forlin, Hattie & Douglas, 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2000; Soto & Goetz, 1998). A number of writers agree that for disabled learners to be fully accommodated, teachers need to shift from one set of assumptions, beliefs, values, norms, relationships, behaviours and practices to another which entails a fundamental reculturing of teaching and learning

(Hargreaves, 1994:255; Hargreaves, 1997:1; Miller, 1998:530; Fullan, 1998:226 cited in Pettipher, 2000).

It is generally a known fact that most teachers already have much of the knowledge and skills to teach inclusively. What literature suggests they lack, is confidence in their own competence (Mittler & Mittler, 2000). This phenomenon could be attributed partly to the misconceptions about the nature of the change process, lack of training opportunities and a long-standing mystification of special needs expertise, which makes them believe that special training is a precondition for inclusion (Mittler, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994). Furthermore, the demarcation of education into special and mainstream education has led to the fact that few regular teachers have had the opportunity to teach all the children in their local community, because disabled children have been sent to special schools and community day care centres.

Furthermore, it needs to be taken into cognisance that providing training opportunities does not necessarily address or influence how teachers feel about inclusion. Such feelings, beliefs, values and attitudes are fundamental and need to be taken seriously. Any doubts and reservations should not be dismissed as reactionary or simply overridden. Teachers need opportunities to reflect on proposals that touch on their values and beliefs as well as affecting their day-to-day professional practice (Mittler, 2000).

2.5 Experiences of disabled learners

The history of the domination of the provision of services by the medical model in South Africa has led to negative attitudes, marginalization and stigmatization of disabled learners. Disabled learners are often characterised as 'inactive learners' remaining on the periphery of academic and social involvement in many educational settings (Torgeson, 1982). Where pullout programmes are practised, most of these learners are removed from mainstream education curricula and their peers, thus subjecting them to a situation where they have to continually re-establish themselves as members of the mainstream of society (McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager & Lee, 1993). These compensatory programs have, therefore,

been nothing less than an effort to remove those unwanted “others” from the “regular” classroom (Peters, 1993).

Even though the movement within education has been towards making curricula accessible for all learners, there is evidence that a ‘curriculum for all’ is still a virtual reality in South Africa. For instance, Francis & Muthukrishna (2001) report that in a rural secondary school in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, that has included disabled learners, it was revealed that although many learners’ stories reflected positive experiences of the curriculum offered at the school, suggestions still existed of barriers embedded in the curriculum that were not being engaged with by the school. For instance, many of the disabled learners involved in the study had had to make frequent visits to hospital, and were sometimes absent because of lengthy hospitalization and regular medical treatment. When the learners were hospitalized, no provision was put in place for learning support to continue during the period of treatment. Consequently, many of the learners had had to repeat a year when they returned from hospital. All the learners in this study had repeated a grade. This suggests that what they received from the school system depended largely on their own ability, motivation and enthusiasm to tackle their schoolwork.

Furthermore, literature reveals that most interactions that included disabled learners have with teachers are primarily directed to inattentiveness and rule infractions (Dorval, McKinney & Feagans, 1993), and they receive more individual contacts with the teacher, but these relate largely to being engaged in activities other than schoolwork (Slate & Saudargas, 1986).

Another common experience for disabled learners in mainstream educational settings is where teachers adopt the view that ‘I do not see difference – children are just children to me.’ Here disabled learners, who are often being alienated by the dominant culture of the school, are treated much like other learners who have more access to dominant forms of capital dominating the workings of the school. McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, and Lee (1993) point out that this view potentially has positive and negative consequences. The

positive dimension of this view is that disabled learners appear to be accepted by the teacher: treated by the teacher fairly and impartially; involved in the same seat arrangement as other learners; and work on the same activities and use the same materials as other learners in the class.

However, there is a potentially troublesome side of this perspective that is hardly problematized in these interactions: instruction may not be differentiated to meet the needs of disabled learners who need support and few adaptations are, thus, provided. Disabled learners are included in the class activities, but their participation is very limited or is totally lacking, and they are not very engaged in the learning process, either by their own or by the teacher's initiation. Because so little or none of the classwork is adapted to meet the individual needs of learners, and the primary mode of instruction is usually whole group, most of these learners are not engaged in the learning process.

The scenario as mirrored above could be attributed to the fact that the inclusion of disabled learners, as Sayed puts it, "... could easily take the form of window dressing (changing the look of things) without recognizing that as different groups become involved in systems, their interactions and varying interests of necessity transform these systems. All too often, social inclusion occurs in an effort to appear responsive to the need for change, without introducing any fundamental changes, and, on the contrary, every effort to maintaining the status quo." (Sayed, 2002:29). In this case, although these learners are physically present, they remain invisible as every effort is made to maintain, as far as possible, the dominant culture of the institution.

Disabled learners experiencing educational difficulty, who find themselves in situations where their teachers 'do not see difference', are often compelled to develop survival strategies. Baker and Zigmond (1990) report that conformity is an important behaviour that learners adopt for successful 'assimilation' into the mainstream classroom – they do not ask for help or assistance or volunteer to answer questions. It is clear that the 'creation of physical space' alone does not ensure access for learners who were marginalized and/or

excluded before. Educational inclusion requires more than the mere presence of those whose heads were not visible before. It requires a painstaking interrogation of the terms and conditions of the context into which disabled learners are being included.

As may be concluded, the experiences of disabled children in mainstream educational settings reflect quite a number of challenges that they have to contend with. The current trends in education place immense demands on parental time, energy and resources, making parents vigilant of children's performance. Children are in the spotlight once they start school and from a very young age begin to understand the premium placed on good marks and academic achievement. This is even far worse for a child with a disability experiencing educational difficulty, as it increases the likelihood that they are regarded negatively in the school setting where individual achievement is highly valued (Joshi, 2000).

Joshi (2000) reports that 'disruptive' children are seated close to the teacher. That is, they are not free to choose a place for themselves, but are assigned seats by the teacher. Children who disrupt classroom activities are generally seated at the front and the quiet and obedient ones, which usually include disabled learners experiencing educational difficulty, at the back. Therefore, making a decision about the seating arrangement rarely takes into cognisance the children's needs.

One of the central assumptions behind including disabled children in mainstream educational settings, based on Wolfensberger's formulation of the normalisation principle (Wolfensberger, 1972), is that the process will increase the social acceptance of disabled children (Szivos, 1992 cited in Hastings & Graham, 1995). This implies that social contact and/or physical presence of disabled children in the same educational setting as able-bodied children will positively affect their attitudes. This notion is based on the assumption that prejudice and negative stereotypes could be broken down through social contact between majority and minority groups. That is, through social contact, those with stereotypical views on minority groups recognise that their perceptions are inaccurate (Allport, 1954) and begin to engage in a process of unlearning the negative stereotypical notions.

In the context of inclusion, theories of impact of contact and/or physical presence on negative attitudes towards outgroups, as compared to ingroups, should modify expectations about the impact of inclusion on the peers of disabled children. This assertion has gained some support from previous studies of children's attitudes towards children experiencing learning difficulties in general. For example, some evaluation studies that have assessed children's attitudes towards peers experiencing learning difficulties who are their classmates suggest that the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream educational settings may have a positive attitudinal effect (Lewis & Lewis, 1988). Ainscow (1991) and Docking (1996) support this notion when they state that the presence of disabled learners in ordinary schools teaches other learners to accept them and learn skills of living with them. However, as indicated elsewhere in this chapter, this should not make us think that the 'creation of physical space' is the answer and that the rest of the pieces of the puzzle will fit together all by themselves just because learners are physically belonging in one class or school.

2.6 Construction of effective schools for all

The school is the site for putting into practice most educational policy. It is, therefore, at the heart of educational change and, therefore, needs to be fully equipped to manage such change effectively, which means that it needs to become an effective 'learning organisation' (Senge, 1990) able to institute cultural changes necessary to achieve a school that is able to listen to, hear and respond to the 'hidden voices', who are mostly disabled children and youth who are regarded as not suited to the existing 'menu' of the regular school (Ainscow, 1995). When schools are successful in moving their practice forward in this manner, this tends to have a more general impact upon how teachers perceive themselves and their work (Ainscow, 1995). In this way the school begins to evolve into what Senge terms a 'learning organisation' – an organisation where people are continually expanding their capacity to create the results they truly desire; new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured; collective aspiration is set free; people are continually learning how to learn together (Senge, 1990:14). If and when schools move to such directions, the cultural and structural changes that occur have significant impact on how teachers perceive learners in their classes whose

progress is a matter of concern. Ainscow argues that “what may happen is that when the overall climate in a school improves, such children are gradually seen in a more positive light. Rather than simply presenting problems that have to be overcome or, possibly, referred elsewhere for separate attention, such pupils may be perceived as providing feedback on existing classroom arrangements” (Ainscow, 1995:11). In such schools, these learners become ‘hidden voices’ that inform and guide improvement activities to transform schools into inclusive learning communities.

This being said, the school is not an island in the sea – it is an organisation that exists within a broader social, economic and political context. The school, as an institution, is not immune to the influences of its wider context. Contrary to this notion, however, engagement with questions of ‘school effectiveness’ has meant regard of lists of characteristics constituting the effective school as universally valid (Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000) – as relevant and applicable to all contexts. This has resulted in the direct importation and replication, and actually the imposing of the notions of an effective school from the North, to countries of the South without much interrogation.

Amongst the misgivings put forward against this framework of thinking are two principal criticisms concerning questions of context. The first concerns contextual relevance. The question being raised is: Are the lists of characteristics constituting an effective school universally valid? The universal nature and applicability across contexts of these school effectiveness factors has raised important concerns from various proponents of school effectiveness from the South. The direction taken has been that effectiveness of schools in ‘developing’ contexts, for instance, may well involve substantially different criteria from those in ‘developed’ countries given their differing contextual realities (Harber & Davies, 1997 cited from Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000).

The second question concerns the ideological context – that is, the social and political values underlying the goals of education. Concern is raised around the fact that the school effectiveness movement has been far too submissive of the importance of the diverse

ideological purposes of schools. 'Many have wanted to prolong our uniquely British love affair with the goals debate, rather than focus on means, as school effectiveness tries to do' (Reynolds, 1998:20). This has raised further questions like: Effective at what? Effective for what? Ignoring or playing down the significance of goals and assuming a false consensus or homogeneity simply reinforces prevailing orthodoxy (Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000).

These misgivings hold water. For instance, in South Africa, a new democratic society is in its infancy stage. As part of the broader metamorphosis of the South African state, the education system is undergoing major transformation. The past decade has witnessed enormous changes in education at various levels including resource distribution, policy, curriculum, classroom management and teacher appraisal have all undergone some form of transformation (Sader, Bailey & Hoosen, 2003). South Africa adopted a new democratic constitution in a decade ago, introduced the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Macro Economic Strategy (GEAR), and is battling with the escalation of crime and violence and the rapid spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Harber & Muthukrishna (2000) contend that curriculum reform in South Africa is being undertaken in directly the opposite manner from, for instance, the British national curriculum – curriculum reform in South Africa has been characterized by a shift away from too much emphasis on packages of subject knowledge and towards such skills as analysis, comprehension, investigation, application, organisation weighing evidence, exploring values and constructing argument. The view taken by Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) is that this will require greater variety in classroom methods away from exclusive reliance on teacher-centred, whole class teaching, and to the contrary, to a blatant bias towards the use of projects, group discussions and student presentations.

This shift is in line with the focus on curriculum reform that is moving towards an 'outcomes based education' informed by seven 'critical cross-field' or 'essential' outcomes. These outcomes deliberately place a high premium on democracy, peace and racial equality, and all teaching and learning will be working, *inter alia*, towards the ability to: identify and

solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and/or community; organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively using visual, symbolic, and/or language skills in various contexts; use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others; demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation. There are, however, five additional outcomes or 'qualities' to support development, which will require learners to understand the importance of: reflecting on and employing a variety of strategies to learn effectively; participating as a responsible citizen in the life of local, national and global communities; being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of contexts; exploring education and career opportunities; developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

Furthermore, school effectiveness in South Africa has tended to not only focus on very different material issues from those found in many northern countries such as the UK, but ideological context also differs. This could be deciphered from the areas of interest that informed a research study conducted by the Centre for Education Policy and Development, which aimed at monitoring the implementation of educational reform in South African schools. Researchers were asked to comment on the following, apart from whether the school had basic infrastructure such as electricity, nutrition scheme, tapped water supply or a telephone: learners are actively involved in school governance; all staff are represented and involved in school governance; school governance is promoting democracy within the school and beyond; the school is free from violence and conflict; conflict and violence among and between staff and learners has been reduced; learners and teachers feel safe within the school and its environs; the school is not open to acts of vandalism, theft and other crimes; school admission policies are not discriminatory and non-exclusionary; there are programmes to address issues of equity, discrimination and racism; the school is involved in community development programmes; structures and procedures within the

school are democratic; authoritarian practices have been reduced (Centre for Education Policy and Development, 1998 cited from Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000).

Given this, it stands to reason that caution needs to be exercised in engaging with the automatic international transfer of school effectiveness characteristics. It is important to appreciate difficulty in applying a set of Western school improvement strategies in the South African context, where school contexts are characterised by very diverse needs and resource allocations, and where, for many schools, core business is one of instituting some acceptable, minimal measure of functional effectiveness.

2.7 Locating the current study

Most studies on the experience of education have traditionally derived from the disciplines and paradigms of psychology, which focus on the individual learner. These studies, for the most part, tend to objectively describe, predict and control experience, rather than describe, interpret and understand it (Ysseldyke, 1987). The current study listens to the voices of teachers on how they position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion in a mainstream semi-rural setting that has integrated disabled learners. It further attempts to address the challenge of understanding ways in which teachers' constructions of their experiences of inclusion of disabled learners shape their professional lives, beliefs, and practices; and interrogates the contradictions, contestations and tensions embedded in these dominant discourses. Basically, the study analyses the interactional dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to deconstruct the notion of discourse as a lens through which teachers' constructions of their experiences of disability and inclusion are to be viewed in this study. Mills (1997) asserts that the concept 'discourse' has become common currency in a variety of disciplines: sociology, linguistics, critical theory, philosophy, social psychology and many other fields, so much so that it is frequently left undefined, as if its usage were simply a matter of common knowledge. It is, thus, of grave importance to note that 'discourse' is a socially constructed notion, which exhibits a multiplicity of significations, meanings or understandings depending on the nature of contexts within which it is located at a given time. Furthermore, if we are to understand how knowledge operates to form subjects (teachers, learners, parents, etc.), then it becomes important to understand the discursive field that operates to uphold a certain truth in an institution, community, society – for example, policy, the media, education department, the principal as a leader and catalyst for change, etc.

3.2 The notion of discourse

The notion of discourse is located within post structural theory. Foucault (1981) cited in Weedon (1987) conceives of the notion discourse or discourses as way(s) of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them. Discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, etcetera, that in some way together produce a particular version of events. Discourse can be thought of as frames of reference against which we can interpret and analyse our reality.

Foucault asserts that discourse is essentially constituted by a configuration of power, knowledge and truth. That is, power produces and controls the epistemology, theoretical structure and taxonomy of formal knowledge, the cultural codes by which groups act out their roles, and the valuable social discourses between diverse ethnic groups and classes of

modern society. More specifically, knowledge and truth are tied up with the way in which power is exercised, and are themselves caught up in power struggles (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). As Foucault notes:

“One can assume that power creates knowledge (and does not just support, use, exploit it), that power and knowledge conclude from each other, that there exists no power relation which does not constitute a certain field of knowledge and there exists no knowledge which does not constitute and is not conditioned by certain power relations.”

(Foucault, 1977:63)

It is possible that a discourse can then fix meaning and that the very process of constituting or constructing a discourse is an exercise of power because of its ability to control what is valid and true as well as who and what is given the authority to verbalise it. Power creates a particular knowledge. For example, the discourses of inclusion, rights, the lay discourse, etcetera, produce different kinds of knowledge and practice around disability and any other learning difficulty. Discourses can also be used as political tools then to justify and provide reasons for doing things that may be oppressive. A particular discourse can, for instance, construct disabled persons as in need of pity or as incapable as opposed to a rights discourse – so decisions are made for them – by professionals, e.g. teachers, doctors, psychologists, and so on.

Foucault provides, contrary to traditional conceptions, a rather different analysis of the notion of power:

“If power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?”

(Foucault, 1979:38).

This is in contrast with how traditional and other theoretical orientations seem to view power – as within what Foucault terms the ‘repressive hypothesis’. In this view, power is

simply a matter of the negative infringement on someone else's rights, where power is taken or confiscated from others, and seen as something which one can possess or hold at another's expense. Foucault shifts the conception of power away from this negative model towards a framework which highlights the fundamentally productive dimension of power. This perspective points to its productive as well as repressive nature. Foucault argues that the perception that repression of acts by those in power simply results in the obliteration of those acts is a simplistic model of actions and power relations. The relationships in which people and groups shape the behaviour and conduct of others do not just thwart or frustrate or prevent behaviour, but often affirmatively create or incite it. As Foucault approaches it, power teaches; it moulds conduct; it trains; it creates and instils aptitudes, identities and habits; it stimulates; it incites desires. Relations of power do not just prevent us from doing things, they incite us and encourage us. Through our actions, we encourage ourselves – to think, act, and understand ourselves in specific ways. In essence, power has to produce new forms of behaviour, new modes of self-understanding, new codes of meaning, traits, values and desires, and as well as restrain behaviours opposed to a dominant culture. It is clear, from Foucault's work, that forms of subjectivity are produced in negotiation with existing power relations. Subjectivity refers to the particular ways in which a person gives meaning to themselves, others and the world. Post structuralist theorists such as Foucault use the term 'subjectivity' to denote the construction of identity. Subjectivity within post structuralism refers to who we are and the ways in which we understand ourselves both consciously and unconsciously within discourse and social and institutional practices.

However, it is crucial to take cognisance of the fact that "productive", for Foucault, does not of necessity insinuate constructive or beneficial. His view is that modern forms of power have often produced misery. For instance, ableism is, in fact, quite productive: It instils compulsive concern with one's physical appearance, it inculcates a need to be like those who are regarded as 'normal' and it instructs in the habit of deference. One might even say that the whole point of the aspect of ableism is to produce particular kinds of

subjects capable of acting creatively and vivaciously within the norms of the dominant discourse of the able-bodied.

In Foucault's terms, some of the important things that power produces are subjects (Foucault, 1982). The notion that power produces subjects emanates from the view that nothing about humans is fixed. Instead we are formed and form ourselves through our interactions and cultures. Individuals are neither preformed before they engage in power relations, nor unchanged by those relations. For Foucault, our participation in power relations literally makes us who we are. For him, it is the push and pull of human relationships that shape us as individuals and groups. That is, as others seek to control and manage us, we succumb to and resist those efforts, and in turn we seek to steer the conduct of others, as well as to shape ourselves.

Secondly, Foucault conceives of power as not something that can be possessed but as a relation rather than a simple imposition. This understanding of power does not relate to repressive power as in the case of state organs such as police and military forces as manipulated by the ruling class to suppress other classes. Such an understanding rejects totalizing schemes that anchor power in ruling or dominant groups and see only the repressive effects of power. As he notes:

“What characterizes the power we are analyzing is that it brings into play relations between individuals or between groups [...] The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome [...]”
(Foucault, 1977 cited in Francis, Muthukrishna & Ramsuran, 2005)

Understanding power in this way, however, raises two crucial questions: Who is oppressing whom? Where is the power? (Francis, Muthukrishna & Ramsuran, 2005). This relation involves an analysis of the degrees of power involved in the relation rather than an assumption that in any power relation there is simply a powerful participant and a powerless one. That is, power circulates through a society rather than being owned by one group. People exercise power over other people and everyone has a little power. A power web

forms which controls everybody. Power is not so easily contained by, for instance, the dominant group – it is more a form of action or relation between people which is negotiated in each interaction, and is never fixed and stable. The emphasis is more on (discursive) structures through which power relation is manifested. This concern is with the ways in which people negotiate power relations, rather than assuming that the powerful person in an institutionalised relation is in fact all-powerful. This implies that it is possible for people who have been relegated to a fairly powerless position within a hierarchy to negotiate with that position and accrue power to themselves (Mills, 1997). This begins to explain how subjects (the oppressed) are able to develop a revolutionary consciousness, and how they can resist oppression. This is because resistance already resides within the anatomy and physiology of power. Where there is power there is resistance. No power relation is simply one of total domination and subordination. There is always a force which may challenge or overthrow such domination and subordination. It is thus clear that Foucault refuses to see power as a location or as emanating from a locality because in his view power is everywhere. All human relations involve efforts to manage the conduct of others, that is, there can be no escaping power. So, if power is everywhere, so too is the possibility of resistance. However, it should be construed that the fact that power is everywhere does not necessarily mean that it is all-powerful. For Foucault, power is a process in which participants attempt to shape the conduct of others, but these attempts are not always successful because of the omnipresence of resistance. Furthermore, they are certainly not always successful in the ways that participants intend. This position is a purposeful move away from a concern with oppressor-victim dichotomy of dominance. Subjects are characterised as being able to engage in their own constitution, acquiescing with or contesting the roles to which they are assigned. That is, subjects are able to be critical despite limits of what can be thought and what can be classified as 'knowable' (Mills, 1997). However, Foucault also focuses on constraint - in his book *The order of discourse* (1981) – the way that we operate within discursive limits rather than assuming that people are free to express whatever they wish. That is, the way in which people make sense of their world relies largely on an existing order of reason and sets of discursive formations that do not translate from one to another (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000).

In addition to producing subjects, power also produces knowledge. Power and knowledge are not diametrically opposed to each other – power and knowledge are interrelated, i.e. they are intertwined in complex ways. As Foucault writes:

“[P]ower produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful) ... power and knowledge directly imply one another; ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”

(Foucault, 1977:27)

For Foucault, ‘knowledge’ is much more a matter of the social, historical and political conditions under which, for instance, statements come to count as true or false (McHoul & Grace, 1993). The exercising of power produces what is held to be knowledge; what is the right interpretation; the valid act or utterance within that practice. When power circulates, it determines to some degree possible ways of acting and limits of what can be done; but it is also a mechanism that enables one to act (Cotton and Hardy, 2004 cited in Francis, Muthukrishna & Ramsuran, 2005).

However, it is important to caution against understanding power as equal to knowledge, as Foucault did not equate power and knowledge. As he writes:

“[W]hen I read – and I know it has been attributed to me – the thesis ‘Knowledge is power,’ or ‘Power is knowledge,’ I begin to laugh, since studying their *relation* is precisely my problem. If they were identical, I would not have to study them and I would be spared a lot of fatigue as a result. The very fact that I pose the question of their relation proves clearly that I do not *identify* them.”

(Foucault, 1980: 43)

Foucault seems to be making a point that knowledge of individuals (and groups) contributes to shaping them and in the process of shaping humans – knowledge is both produced and used.

Moreover, just as power is not necessarily evil, for Foucault, knowledge is not necessarily salutary; it too is bivalent, depending on the uses to which it is put and the effects that it creates. Foucault also speaks of truth as both a product of power and as having effects of power – of having been bestowed with a certain force that has a capability of excluding or invalidating other knowledges (the excluded or invalidated knowledges are the “subjugated knowledges”). As Foucault expatiates:

“Truth isn’t outside power, or lacking in power ... each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.”

(Foucault, 1980:131)

In his book, *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1969) indicates that what is required, is that we trace the origins of ‘the truth’ that allow particular discourses to emerge at that particular time – and to gain power. We need to deconstruct these discourses. When we understand the origins as well as what supports and entrenches a discourse that impacts on our current understanding of ourselves, we can then question its truth as well as its legitimacy. Foucault examines the ways in which discourses, which have an institutional base, gain and assign control and power. Foucault’s point here is that even true knowledge needs to be questioned in terms of the role it plays in shaping or undergirding our practices, institutions, and our very selves. For Foucault, knowledge or truth must be judged by its effects. What enables discourses to become significant and powerful is that they follow the rules of formation – rules of regulation constrain what can be considered appropriate or not for society, school or community.

Discourses can shift and they continually jostle, overlap and give way to each other. There can be gaps and contradictions, and these have the ability to both maintain the status quo or resist and move towards social transformation. Because of the fluid nature of discourses – sometimes, dominant understandings could be difficult to resist.

Essentially, this theoretical position has its foundations on the fact that in any given historical period we can write, speak or think about a given social object or practice (disability, for instance) only in certain specific ways and not others. ‘A discourse’ would then be whatever constrains – but also enables – writing, speaking and thinking within such specific historical limits (McHoul & Grace, 1993). Within such a framework, discourse refers to what can be said and become an object of thought, as well as to who may speak, when and from what position and by what right (Solomon, 2004). In this sense, discourse refers simultaneously to the context meaning, social relations of power (Ball, 1990) and the conditions that allow the emergence of certain meanings instead of others.

In Foucault’s terms, education constitutes an extremely central system in what concerns the determination and control of the “limits” and “forms” of the selective social constitution, establishment, dissemination and change of discourses and particularly in what concerns “social appropriation” of discourses (Solomon, 2004). As Foucault states:

“... we know very well that, in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it [education] follows the lines laid down by social differences, conflicts and struggles. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them.”

(Foucault, 1981:46)

The notion of ‘discourse’ is a useful lens for this study because as Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare (1999) have observed “where sociologists have taken an interest in the process of disablement, they have typically not addressed this as an example of social exclusion or oppression, but followed instead what has variously been referred to as an “individual,” “medical,” or “personal tragedy” model of disability” (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999:

3). This lens will be used to listen to the teachers' voices on how they position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion, how teachers' constructions of their experience of inclusion of disabled learners shape their professional lives, beliefs, and practices within these dominant discourses.

RESEARCH CONTEXT, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Socio-economic context of Newcastle Municipality¹

Newcastle Municipality is part of Amajuba District Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Census 2001 (Statistics South Africa, 2001) indicates that there are 332 980 people in the Newcastle Municipality. The Newcastle population comprises African (91%), Coloured (1%), Indian (3%) and White (5%) race groups. In terms of Census 1996 (Statistics South Africa, 1996), there has been a steady growth of 16% in the population of Newcastle. There are 175 809 females (53%) and 157 170 males (47%) in the Newcastle Municipality.

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the population is below the age of 34, which indicates that the Newcastle population is relatively young. The population is dominated by the youthful population of 49%. This relatively young population signifies high potential for population growth in the future. However, it is also this part of the population that is most under the potential threat of HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, the demand for education and health services will remain high for the foreseeable future. That portion of the population (86%) falling within the 15 -64 age group would essentially be classified as the potentially economically active population of Newcastle.

Forty two percent (42%) of households in Newcastle have five or more people per household, with the average household size for Newcastle being 4,7.

Thirty three percent (33%) of the Newcastle population between the ages of 5 – 20 is attending one or the other education institution. For the age group of over 20 years, 7% of the population has indicated that they have had no form of schooling at all. It may be assumed that approximately 20% of the Newcastle population may be literate.

¹ Source: Newcastle Municipality IDP Review 2004 – 2006 (First Draft)

In terms of the provincial comparisons, KwaZulu-Natal remains the province with the highest HIV prevalence rate among antenatal clinic attendees with a rate of 36,5%. The Newcastle District Office has further reported that Amajuba District Municipality area has the second highest HIV prevalence amongst pregnant women in the Province.

Newcastle Municipality has an unemployment rate of 54% (an increase of 14% from 1996), with 75% of the total unemployed labour force of the Amajuba District Municipality emanating from Newcastle, and 79% of the total employed labour force of the District being concentrated in Newcastle.

83 579 (25%) of the Newcastle population have been categorised as “Not economically active”. These people fall within the age group 15-64. The high unemployment rate in Newcastle implies increasing levels of poverty and a high dependency rate. It could, therefore, be assumed that every formally employed person supports on average 5,8 persons. The impact of HIV and AIDS and the decline in the economy have also contributed to the high unemployment rate in Newcastle.

Forty six percent (46%) of the population is employed in the formal sector.

The annual household income for Newcastle is generally low with 56% of the households earning R9 600 per annum or less (R800 per month or less), which would qualify these households for Indigent Support in terms of the Municipality’s Indigent Policy. Twenty six percent (26%) of households could be classified as average income households with the remaining 18% being from the higher income category. The low levels of income amongst the majority of households in Newcastle also correlate to the high unemployment rate in Newcastle.

4.2 A map of the research site

The school was established in 1973. It is situated in a densely populated semi-rural township in the northern parts of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, about 25km away from

town. The area is socially and economically deprived, and many of the learners come from working class households. Three hundred and sixty eight learners (188 male and 180 female) receive a child support grant. One hundred and twenty nine (129) learners are raised by single parents (Males: 53 only mother and 39 only father; Females: 37 only mother). The school has good sanitation, transport facilities and electricity. Although the school is a walking distance from the tar road, the road leading to the school is a dirt road in a very poor condition – more like a foot path than a road.

The school has a learner population of one thousand two hundred and fifty (1250) with an age range of learners of 3 to 17, and runs from crèche to Grade 4. There are ninety five (95) overage learners, who actually should be at high school according to the departmental conditions of admission. These include learners with disabilities. All the disabled learners in this school were included when the school took a conscious decision to open their school for the admission of disabled learners. The school has integrated ninety three (93) learners classified as learners with special needs: ten (10) deaf, two (2) epileptic, four (4) physically disabled, three (3) cerebral palsied, one (1) autistic and seventy three (73) experiencing various learning difficulties. These learners ranged in age as follows: deaf: 6 – 12, epileptic: 10 – 16, physically disabled: 8 – 14, cerebral palsied: 12 – 13, autistic: 9 and experiencing learning difficulty: 6 – 17, and they have been integrated in four grades, that is, grades 1 to 4. All learners are African, and most come from the area where the school is situated, whilst others from as far as outside the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. The language of learning (LOL) at the school is English for hearing learners, and the South African Sign Language for deaf learners. The home language for learners range from SiSwati, South African Sign Language, IsiZulu to Sesotho.

The school has a teaching staff of twenty six (26): one principal, one deputy principal, three heads of department, four grade heads and seventeen assistant teachers. The school also employs four non-educator support staff who helps with a myriad of activities around the school.

The school premises are well-secured with a fence and boasts an attractive yard with beautiful trees and a flower garden. One of the members of the support staff looks after the school premises. The school has sent four of its staff members for training in first aid by the St John's Ambulance and keeps a first aid kit, which is managed by the trained staff. Other assets at the school are a refrigerator, photocopier, overhead projector and a PA system. The school has a working phone and fax, and is awaiting the installation of Internet and e-mail facilities.

The school has twenty one (21) classrooms: fifteen (15) permanent and six (6) mobile, a computer room and an administration block. In terms of the departmental teacher:learner ratio for the KwaZulu-Natal Province, the school is supposed to have thirty two (32) classrooms. Two hundred and seventy (270) grade one learners are accommodated in a hall, the size of two classrooms. This makes it impossible for teachers to provide individual instruction for learners who lag behind others with their schoolwork. Two hundred and twelve (212) Grade four learners are accommodated in the neighbouring primary school, and when the school has to hold meetings, the grade four learners have to take their lessons under trees.

The school also has a functioning computer room. The computer room houses forty nine (49) computers, twenty nine (29) of which the school purchased from its coffers, whilst twenty (20) were won when the school took First Prize in Category: Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching: Most Improved School Awards 2003, sponsored by the Telkom Foundation. Grade 1 to 7 learners are taught basic computer skills by a qualified teacher. The crèche and Grade R are not included in the computer literacy programme. The reason given for this was that it is school policy because they are regarded as still very young.

The school toilets are flush toilets and are in a very good condition. There are three (3) toilets for teachers and fifteen (15) for learners: seven (7) for boys, one (1) of which has a broken seat, and eight (8) for girls, one of which has a broken cistern, and one for disabled

learners. There are also two (2) hand-washing basins next to the toilets each with a tap for use by learners.

The school has a netball field within their premises, which is however in a very bad state. Only the poles are an indication that it is a netball field. The school shares the soccer field with the community – they do not have their own within the school premises.

4.3 Problem statement

The purpose of the current study was to listen to how teachers position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion in a mainstream setting that has integrated disabled learners. It further attempted to address the challenge of understanding the ways in which teachers' constructions of their experiences of inclusion of disabled learners shape their professional lives, beliefs, and practices.

The key research questions of the study were:

- How do teachers position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion?
- How do teachers' constructions of their experiences of inclusion of disabled learners in a rural context shape their professional lives, beliefs, and practices?
- What are the contradictions, contestations and tensions embedded in these dominant discourses?

The reason for the choice of the site is that unlike other inclusive education initiatives such as Resource and Educator Development Project: Towards Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, a pilot project of the National Department of Education funded by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) (Department of Education, 2003), and the South African-Finnish Co-operation Programme in the Education Sector (SCOPE) (Department of Education, 2002), it is a school initiative rather than a department- and/or non-governmental organisation-driven initiative.

4.4 Access to participants

I negotiated access to where I planned to conduct the study in October 2004 prior to the year I was going to conduct the study. I held initial meetings with the participants where they met me, and asked questions. I made initial contacts myself because “building the interviewing relationship begins the moment the potential participant hears of the study” (Seidman, 1998:37). I informed participants that their participation in the study was voluntary. I also assured them of the confidentiality of their responses and instructed them not to discuss their responses with others.

4.5 Piloting research instruments

I piloted the research instruments in two primary schools in the Estcourt Circuit, Othukela District, Ukhahlamba Region of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The main reason for selecting these schools to pilot the instruments was their proximity to my residential area.

After a discussion on the experiences revealed during the pilot exercise, recommendations were made and the instruments were adjusted and prepared accordingly for collecting data at the school where I was going to conduct my research study.

4.6 Research design and methodology

The key research questions were investigated through a qualitative research design to assist in providing rich ‘context-bound’ data (Creswell, 1994), with an underlying belief that situations are complex and should therefore be portrayed from many dimensions rather than focusing on a narrow field (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The intention was to focus on the teachers’ perceptions and experiences, and the way they made sense of their professional lives and context (Merriam, 1988), with an attempt to try to get not into one but multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research design consisted of in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Qualitative research was appropriate in this context as “it is a systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a particular social context ... a means for describing and attempting to understand the

observed regularities in what people do, or in what they report as their experience” (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000). A case study approach was used. The case study approach was seen as appropriate to the study as it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation bounded in time and space, and to attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work (Rose & Grosvenor, 2001; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The unit of analysis was a particular school context.

The study was conducted at the beginning of the second term of the school year so that learners had had time to get to know one another and their teachers, and become familiar with their new classroom environment and the school as a whole.

Semi-structured interviews were held with five (5) class teachers, four of whom were in direct contact with the included disabled learners, and the school principal. It was important to have as participants, teachers who would be able to talk from experience about their interactions with the included disabled learners. The interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide. The interview guide was important as it set out ‘a list of things to be sure to ask about’ (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The aim was to let the participants speak freely in their own terms about how they experience a schooling context that has integrated disabled learners. The guide was adjusted to the participants’ area of activity, depending on whether s/he was the principal or a classroom teacher.

Teachers were interviewed one by one on different days. A period of not less than an hour was allocated per teacher and interviewees were allowed to respond in the language they were most comfortable with. Most of the responses were given in IsiZulu, whilst in some cases, interviewees used a mixture of IsiZulu and English. The principal was interviewed last. The reason for this was that I wanted to integrate most of the issues raised by the teachers in the interview with the principal.

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

The school was visited for a period of four (4) weeks. On my first day at the school, I was introduced to learners as a teacher and university student who was interested in learning more about their learning. It was agreed that learners would not be informed of the real purpose of my presence in the class, because I wanted to observe the classroom situation in its natural state. Observations focused on the following specific areas:

- Learner-teacher interaction
- Learner- learner interaction
- How teachers delivered curriculum?
- Learner activities
- Learner behaviour.

Observations were conducted at different sessions of the school day to observe behaviour patterns of learners and teachers. Class observations were conducted during lessons while school observations targeted behaviour during free times, during recreation and at the morning devotions and after school. School observations were structured as follows: **Morning activities:** Observations started before the arrival of learners, educators and support staff so that I was able to observe all activities in the morning. Later on, I would observe activities at the morning assembly. **Break times:** A break in the school activities was assigned for observations. Movements of learners and patterns of groupings were observed. Learners were consulted for better understanding of any observable groupings. **After school activities:** All activities taking place from the time when the last period or session ends to the time when everyone else has left the premises served as activities for observation. Other extramural/extracurricular activities, such as staff meetings, that were scheduled for a later period were also observed.

I observed at least four classes, three full days each. By spending three days with the learners and teachers in their classrooms, I expected to get a sense of interactions between learners and their teachers in general, and with disabled learners in particular. Non-participant observation was used with an intention to reduce any interaction with the participants and to focus the attention on the events (Burns, 2000). The decision against the

use of a structured observation schedule was taken, as I was not looking for specific behaviours, but the objective was to generate a descriptive record of what happened in the observed settings. Consequently, a more unstructured technique was used to gather narrative accounts of the field. I also observed at least three staff meetings to get to know the school better. During observations, I made field notes, cross-checked them with the teachers at times to ensure that interactions and activities were correctly interpreted and typed them soon after, adding reflections. Data from the observations was used to inform my follow-up questions in the interviews, and to generate tentative interpretations.

Although some documentation was regarded as confidential, the school was willing to allow me access to its documents on condition that they remained confidential. Through document analysis, I conducted a careful examination of the relevant documents such as various school policies, children's workbooks, snap survey report, admission forms, learners' progress reports, departmental correspondence, in-service training modules, and etcetera. I used documents and artefacts to understand the context and triangulate data elicited through other methods. The information generated from these artefacts provided a perspective on both the learners being written about and the individuals responsible for these documents.

4.7 Data validation

With the permission from the participants, I audio-tape recorded and transcribed the interviews. I then gave copies of the transcripts to the participants and requested them to verify the information both as a means of validating and cross-checking the data. After receiving feedback, I then made the necessary adaptations to the data.

4.8 Triangulation

I found it necessary to develop a means of triangulating, a system of cross-validating the findings, as I was the person responsible for establishing and corroborating the findings. In the absence of external measures with which to check the 'truth' of the findings, I then used

several internal devices to provide convergent evidence. The following sources of evidence served for triangulation:

- interview with five class teachers
- interview with principal
- classroom observations
- observation of learners during breaks
- observation of learners before and after school
- observation of learners during assembly
- observation of staff meetings
- document analysis

To find regularities in the data, I compared different sources, situations, and methods to see whether the same pattern kept recurring. A theme of “institutional collaboration” was cross-checked by comparing data found in artefact collections, participant interviews and field observations of various processes taking place at the school. All the above-mentioned devices corroborated and verified the evidence, supporting the finding that successful inclusion was infested with continuous challenges.

4.9 Data analysis

I began with data analysis as soon as the first set of data was gathered and ran parallel to data collection process because each activity (data collection and interim analysis) informed and drove the other activities. Data was segmented, that is, divided into relevant units or chunks of meaning, social scenes, or events. Because it was difficult to process large amounts of diverse content all at once, I concentrated on sets of smaller and similar material at any one time. However, I began with reading all of the data to gain a sense of the whole, which facilitated the interpretation of smaller units of data.

I developed a classification system while collecting data. This helped me to divide the data into segments, that is, smaller units of data containing a chunk of meaning. I followed the

following steps, as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2001), to develop an organising system:

Step 1: I read the first data set carefully and continued to read each data set. I wrote down ideas about the data as I read. This gave me ideas about individual pieces and about the larger phenomenon of interest.

Step 2: I took any data set to begin with and noticed the topics as I read the entire field observation and interview. I asked myself, “What is this about?” “What are these teachers doing or talking about?” “What was important in this setting at this time about this small set of data?” Each topic was written in the margin of a copy of the data set.

Step 3: I then made a list of topics on a separate sheet, with one column for each data set. I then compared the topics for duplication and overlapping meanings. I drew lines between the columns to connect similar topics. On a separate sheet of paper, I clustered together similar topics – those connected by lines. With a list of all the topics, I clustered topics that were similar, returning to the data if necessary. For each cluster of topics, the best-fitting name was stated from among the original topic labels or a new one was created that captured the essence better. I then wrote a provisional description of each topic. I made a new list on a separate sheet containing three columns. The first column contained major topics found in the data sets; the second held unique topics that seem important to the research purpose in spite of the rarity of their occurrence; the third column had leftover topics.

Step 4: Using unmarked copies of each data set I worked with so far, I applied the preliminary classification system, using the topics listed in the first and second columns. I wrote a code next to the appropriate data segment.

Step 5: I then placed the topics that I remembered as occurring in all or most data sets, then made a list of unique topics that were important for the purpose of my research. I then looked at my topics from different angles, and identified key themes that emerged.

Documents which included various school policies, children’s workbooks, snap survey report, admission forms, learners’ progress reports, departmental correspondence, and etcetera were analysed and recorded under the emerging themes and patterns.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In his book, *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1969) indicates that what is required, is that we trace the origins of ‘the truth’ that allow particular discourses to emerge at that particular time – and to gain power. We need to deconstruct these discourses. When we understand the origins as well as what supports and entrenches a discourse that impacts on our current understandings of ourselves and others, we can then begin to question its truth as well as its legitimacy. Foucault examines the ways in which discourses, which have an institutional base, gain and assign control and power. Discourses can also be used as political tools then to justify and provide reasons for doing things that may be oppressive. For instance, a particular discourse of disability can construct disabled persons as in need of pity or as incapable as opposed to a rights discourse – so decisions are made for them – by professionals such as doctors, teachers, psychologists, and so on.

In this study, my analysis will focus on identifying discourses in teachers’ constructions of their experience of inclusion at a semi-rural mainstream school that has included disabled learners – whether these discourses are legitimated or impact certain knowledges and practices – while silencing or challenging others. The key research questions for this study were as follows:

- How do teachers position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion?
- How do teachers’ constructions of their experiences of inclusion of disabled learners in a mainstream context shape their professional lives, beliefs, and practices?
- What are the contradictions, contestations and tensions embedded in these dominant discourses?

5.2 Discourse of differentness

5.2.1 Introduction

Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997) contend that a condition of oppression exists when the dominant group has the power and authority to define and enact reality for the oppressed groups. That is, it determines what is “normal”, “valid”, “real” and “correct” within that society. For instance, disabled people are judged as an anomaly based on the dominant discourse of able-bodiedness. This implies that the experience and culture of the able-bodied people is presented as the norm or reality. Norms function like an impersonal, invisible and an ‘inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by internalizing to the point that he [sic] is his own overseer’ (Foucault, 1980:155). This leads to a situation where the oppressed group is exercising surveillance over, and against itself, because it perceives itself as being in a state of continuous, conscious and permanent visibility (McHoul & Grace, 1993). In order to achieve this, able-bodied people use prejudice, stigmatization, stereotyping and discrimination to maintain their power and authority, and set the rules that define relations within society. Able-bodied people construct differences that disabled people, as an oppressed group, exhibit as lack or negation, because they see their own experiences and interpretation of the world as superior. In this study, discourses about difference as deficit were often embedded in the narratives of teachers on what it meant to be disabled. Allegiance to this framework was evident in teachers’ voices about being different. In this study, teachers constructed most disabled learners as pitiful, helpless, fragile, deviant, and in contrast, a few as heroes, when judged against the measure of the dominant discourse.

5.2.2 *Being ‘normal’: Myths and misconceptions*

Teachers’ narratives revealed that teachers in this study had not had any interaction with a person with a disability in their family life before – teachers only “saw them from a distance”. They started interacting closely with disabled persons after the school’s decision to open itself to the admission of disabled children. Teachers reported different practices and thoughts that they experienced the first time they had a disabled child in their school or class. Teachers’ practices and thoughts were predominantly shaped by the way society sees

differentness. Using the 'normal' as an ideal, teachers saw their understandings of difference as 'normal and natural'. Teachers reported experiencing mixed feelings "I was happy for them, but at the same time I felt this was a challenge." Some reported that they were afraid of a learner with a disability: "I must speak for myself. I was afraid of them. There was a child who I taught, Sambo; he was disabled and I was very scared of him."

Some teachers thought that being close to disabled children would cause problems in their personal lives: "I think ... I was scared that I was going to get a child like that." There were also feelings of not knowing what to do – of confusion. This led to a range of reactions towards disabled children. For instance, one teacher reported that:

“... There was a physically disabled child ... you could see from the face of the teacher that when the child approaches ..., it was like the teacher wanted to push him away ...”

Teachers also reported experiencing a negative attitude towards disabled children because of the lack of interaction with and knowledge about disabled persons earlier in their lives. One teacher stated, "I was very negative because I did not understand. I did not know how to react ... you see there was this negative feeling when looking at these children."

Some teachers reported that for all their lives they had been separated from disabled people. Disabled people went to special schools and the teachers who participated in this study all received their education in mainstream schools. Teachers, being subjected to the power of this gaze of normalcy, believed that this was a 'natural' arrangement of how life should be, and were, therefore, socialised to not want to be associated with a special school because they were not a special school: "... we know that if you go to [name of special school] ... we know that those children are like that, ... so the presence of them here ... we did not need this ...” Most of these teachers had been effectively shaped and deprived by the normalizing gaze of the opportunity to resist these social constructions of difference. As a result, they seemed to have no desire to revolt against the deficit construction of difference.

5.2.3 Pathologising difference: *"We cannot teach imbeciles"*

Despite having spent more than four years with disabled children, discourses of difference as deficit still emerged in how teachers constructed learner identities. Disabled learners were often constructed as not meeting some pre-established norm or standard of the 'real' child as found in the study by Reay (2004:32). Teachers' narratives revealed that the learner with a disability was receiving judgement that they were different, marked or inferior. Two of the teachers reported:

"They [disabled children] are very short-tempered. They are easily irritable ... This other boy, Sizwe, he is bully – he beats others."

"... most of them [disabled children] are very disruptive. They are disruptive even in the classroom."

Deficit thinking and pathologising the lived experiences of learners shaped teachers' understandings of who should have access to mainstream and special education. These were commonly framed in powerful blaming discourses:

"... we know that if you go to [name of special school], you have a learning problem ..."

So, when the school was opened to learners with disabilities, these constructions of difference, which hold individuals in a 'mechanism of objectification' (Foucault, 1977:187), continued to exist. This constructed disabled learners as individual objects to be "treated", "changed", "improved", "trained or corrected", "normalised" (ibid.:191). Within this context, teachers' narratives revealed that teachers understood their role as helping disabled learners do ordinary things, in order for them to gain the required amount of social capital, the condition of which was to become 'more like us'. As one teacher expresses the notion:

"... they can now fit in the mainstream classroom ..."

The problematic dimension of this is that if teachers are out to make disabled learners 'more like us', abilities and potentials of learners are likely to be disregarded. This promotes human helplessness as power is stripped from the learner (Clark, Dyson & Millward, 1998).

5.2.4 *Contradictions and silences in an unequal society*

Teachers' narratives seemed to construct difference into dichotomies that functionally erased ambiguities of membership and stigmatised disabled learners. Teachers were still using particular terms such as 'right', 'normal', 'capable', 'able', 'complete' to refer to able-bodied learners. These terms are directly contrastable with 'wrong', 'abnormal', 'incapable', 'unable', 'incomplete'. However, there were silences in teachers' voices with regard to references to disabled learners. Teachers would refer or imply to disabled learners by referring to able-bodied learners. For instance, one teacher thought that we must,

“... mix them [disabled learners] with those that are 'normal' in the mainstream class ...”

Teachers would not articulate that disabled learners are 'abnormal' or 'not normal', but would imply that by referring to able-bodied learners as 'normal'. The main tactic used by teachers here was to try to pretend that everything was normal, avoiding all direct reference to disability (Allan, Brown & Riddell, 1998). As Michalko (1998) argues, the problematic dimension of this dichotomous construction is that in each case, one “side” of the dichotomy is stigmatized. For example, within the context of this school, in the constructed binary of deaf/hearing, the assumption was that deaf is “adversity”, and hearing was “trouble free”. In such a case, difference to the normative measure was socially constructed as “deficit” rather than an alternate ontology (Gordon & Rosenblum, 2001). This is a problematic view because whatever disabled learners may think of themselves, they were constantly given a negative, devalued, stigmatized identity by teachers, and much of their social life was a struggle against this imposed image. On the other hand, difficulties that the so called “trouble-free” able-bodied child might be experiencing were concealed and could

not be interrogated. This case in point shows how difficult it was for these teachers to challenge dominant discourses and to participate in the construction of alternate ones. Teachers were often caught in the web of the gaze of normalcy that is characterised by a tissue of myths, fears, and misunderstandings that society attaches to the status of people who are disabled.

Furthermore, narratives of teachers revealed that disabled learners were being incorporated in ways that subjected them to the status quo, in ways that expected them to comply with and meet standards predetermined by dominant culture of ableism. Teachers reported that they treated disabled learners “like all children” and regarded them as “normal like us ...”. Often being ‘included’ meant that learners needed to adapt to a hostile, anti-cultural environment in which assumptions were fixed about what constitute good schooling (Jansen, 1998). This ‘one size fits all’ approach as alluded to by De Haan (2000) stems from the assumptions that social inequality can be overcome by providing the same arrangements for all learners.

However, there were some teachers whose narratives reflected that they disagreed with the assumptions of the ‘one size fits all’ approach, and pointed out that wanting to treat all learners in the same way, as children, was a problematic view because if you are,

“... not looking at them individually, you lose the opportunity of knowing them as individuals ...”

Narratives of these teachers suggested that one size does not fit all, because learners do not arise from positions of social, economic and political equality as stressed by Sayed (2002). Teachers conceded that the ‘one size fits all’ approach would lead to the poverty of interrogating social structures, relations and processes that shape the identities and experiences of individual learners. Seeing learners as homogenous may lead to seeing disabled learners as a homogenous group which, as Watson (2004) suggests, can obscure differences between disabled learners, which may be about gender, sexuality, class, impairment, and so on. This can also deny disabled learners their individuality, and tell little

about the actual experience of living with an impairment or the personal experience of disablement. The danger with this is that, as these teachers note, disabled learners will cease to be seen as individuals, as the commonality of their experience becomes all-important.

Barton (1999) contends that "... deep structural socio-economic conditions and relations of society, ... maintain divisive inequalities, discriminations and exclusionary practices. It is important, therefore, to recognise that education cannot be viewed in a vacuum ..." (Barton, 1999:54). Vincent alludes to the same fact when he points out that,

"In any consideration of ... schools, it is important to emphasise that relationships are conducted within a society still marked by ... cultural antagonisms" (Vincent, 1999:174).

All teachers, who participated in this study, agreed that it is crucial for society to accept disabled people for what they are, and understand that they did not choose to be disabled as,

"... disabled people have not created themselves ... they were made disabled by certain circumstances" and that

"society should not think of them as outcasts ... or people that we should pity all the time ..." or that

"disabled people have not done something wrong, and being disabled is not punishment meted to them for their sins ..."

Their view was that society should work to eradicate all forms of exclusionary pressures and create conditions for disabled people to define themselves because "... whatever their condition, they can still lead successful lives ..." if they are given the space to do so. In order to achieve this, it is important to note that schools do not operate from a vacuum – a

position of immunity - but they are immersed within a web of social forces propelled by the unequal arrangement of society.

5.2.5 *Inclusion, empathy or fear?*

Teachers narratives revealed that the biggest difference between disability and other stigmatised statuses such as black, female, etc, is that, in the other cases, the non-stigmatised have little or no fear of suddenly joining the ranks of the stigmatised (Gordon & Rosenblum, 2001). For instance, white people do not worry about becoming black; men do not worry about becoming women. The fact that disability is always a potential status was evident in expressions such as "... anyone can find himself like them. The situation can change at any time. I would be disabled the time I go out of that door."

Teachers mentioned a number of situations that might cause a person to be disabled, including that: one might be involved in a car accident, and in that way become disabled:

"... sometimes you find that when the child was born he was right, and he was involved in a car accident and was hurt in the head ... we had a child ... he was not born disabled ... he was involved in a car accident";

Life situations which affect people's mental status negatively:

"There are situations here ... which affect one's state of mind to an extent that one could develop a mental illness ... I may find myself crazy and picking up papers ...".

Accidents that happen during learning and teaching:

"During learning, let's say we are conducting a scientific experiment, I may have a certain dangerous chemical substance blowing into my eyes and end up being blind."

For these teachers, a variety of things could lead to disability for anyone at any time. However, their constructions of being disabled as being pitiful, helpless and unfortunate, resembled a re-coiling to workings of the discourse of charity.

Early humans deeply believed that the power to cause physical and mental derangement was carried by gods, who inflicted disability as a punishment upon those who incurred their anger (Winzer, 1997). Although early Christianity saw itself as having vanquished a pantheon of gods, it still believed in 'punishment or vengeance from a Divine Master in retaliation for the sins of the affected individual or the parents' (Winzer, 1997:85). In many parts of the world, disabled people are still viewed as polluted, creatures of evil omen, dangerous to the community, and to themselves. They are shunned by all who do not wish to be defiled or corrupted, or who have regard for the safety of their own body and soul.

Narratives of teachers showed that this powerful gaze shaping the thoughts and practices of teachers was still impervious to the sort of resistance organised by the disability movement and their allies against it. Some teachers reported that they had found that disability is a very difficult thing to accept. In addition, narratives of some teachers suggested that they still believed that giving birth to a disabled child was tragedy for the family in which the child is born.

“I try to accept them, but I often think I am going to get a child like that ...”

5.2.6 *Against whose standards?*

Narratives of teachers who had a disabled child in their classroom, presented disabled learners as heroes who are able to beat oppression and do better than those who have more access to social power. This is how one teacher described Sabelo, an epileptic learner, in her class:

“This boy, Sabelo, is very good. He even beats those that are normal.”

There are three problematic dimensions of this view. The first one has to do with the measure or standard against which disabled learners are being measured. This view seems to bring disabled learners under the measure of dominant culture (Young, 2000). The second concern is linked to the first one. The fact that disabled learners' performance is seen to be above some pre-established standard is likely to cause the school not to interrogate its norms, beliefs and values of operation and to carry on as usual. The third one has to do with those disabled learners or able-bodied learners who do not have adequate 'means of control' to handle the situation of being oppressed (Quin, 2004:50). There is high probability that teachers might think that just because so and so can do well, why can't others like him or those that are "more normal" than him, do well?

5.2.7 Alternate lens, competing attitudes

Teachers' narratives revealed that once some teachers had had direct experience of teaching disabled children in their classrooms, they felt that their attitudes had changed and that they had become more accepting, and began to see disability not as tragedy, an 'unfortunate personal circumstance' (Watson, 2004:102-103), but as an opportunity for learning. They report,

"I am now comfortable with these children [disabled children]. I can see that their presence here is resource ..."

This seemed to suggest that the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream educational settings may have a positive attitudinal effect (Lewis & Lewis, 1988). Some teachers were open about the fact that viewing disabled people as tragedy in the family does not help disabled people to participate as members of an inclusive society "... feeling sorry for him is not going to help him ...". They were of the opinion that instead disabled people should be regarded as a "... resource ..." from whom we could "... learn most of the things ...". They felt that it was important for

“all of us to have them here [because] the support that they get ... benefit the parent and the child because now they know that they are part and parcel of the community ... and even the community now ... understands that they also have the right to be given a chance to work if there are job opportunities ... in the community.”

They felt that having disabled children at their school makes disabled people visible as members of the community, and makes the community aware of the rights of disabled people.

5.2.8 Conclusion

Barton (1995) argues that the way in which disability is constructed and defined, by whom, with what consequences for the individuals concerned, and the society in which they reside, are fundamental issues. Portraying disabled people as passive, unable, incapable, ‘not normal’, incomplete, unfortunate recipients of disabling abuse and charity significantly inhibits notions that they have rights and can actively work to change their circumstances. However, portraying disabled people as heroic figures minimises the very real costs of oppression and encourages the belief that disabled people need no help – that they can do it alone. Both these positions are problematic, unacceptable, offensive and counter-productive perspectives. This assertion is quite important in that it takes account of the fact that oppression involves relations of domination and the absence of choices in the lives of the oppressed (Hooks, 1984), in this instance, disabled learners. Consequently, how we see oppressed groups relationally is of critical importance. As can be discerned from the above discussion, after more than four years having disabled learners at this school, constructions of differentness within the discourse of normalcy – of seeing disabled people as an anomaly and expecting them to become “more like us” - were still audible in the teachers’ voices.

The experience of disability is from a socio-political perspective to be seen as ‘part of the wider and fundamental issues of prejudice and economic inequality’ (Morris, 1993:68). For this reason, how we see disability and difference in general as part of our strategy to

challenge disabilist oppression is a necessary measure towards eradicating other forms of oppression.

5.3 Education for all: Policy-practice tensions

The policy commitment of the national and provincial Departments of Education suggest that particular enabling mechanisms and processes are needed to enable the education system, including teachers and learners, to minimise, address and prevent barriers to learning and development which may exist or arise (Department of Education, 1997; 2001). Teachers in this context grappling with inclusion of disabled learners reported that their major concern was the lack of capacity and vision in some of the departmental officials in providing the required services to their school in order to assist their school with providing quality education for all learners. This is how some of the teachers expressed tensions in working with some of the departmental officials:

“... sometimes I find that some departmental officials’ views obstruct what I am trying to do here ...”

“My prayer is that if people could learn not be crazy about promotions and want to be promoted to offices before they are mature and experienced, because you find that once people are in these offices, they do not know what to do and how to do it. You find that if you need help and you call these people to the school, they have no clue how to go about dealing with your case ...”

“... PGSES [Psychological, Guidance and Special Education Services] does not visit our school ... they have never visited our school ... you call them, they do not come ... that frustrates us a lot ...”

“The Department does conduct workshops, but facilitators lack in-depth knowledge of inclusive education; you see when a person is talking about something

that he does not understand. The bad thing is that we expect something better from these people; they are our seniors. ...”

“... it should only be [name of the official] who visits our school, because other staff are unable to assist us, and we should wait for [name of the official] ...”

“Sometimes you find that they do not invite us ... I do not understand why they sometimes sideline us as if we do not belong in this district ... that frustrates us ... having our progress working against us.”

There are two issues that emerge from the above excerpts. The first one is that they paint a picture of department officials who lack awareness, are demoralised, have fear, and lack confidence and competence of dealing with a diverse range of learner needs. This does not only lead to a dearth of skills and knowledge, but also contributes to a system which is unable to meet a diversity of learner needs and prevent barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 1997; 2001). If becoming an effective school happens to be riddled with so many tensions, how are other schools going to be motivated to work towards becoming inclusive schools? Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005) argue that support is the cornerstone of successful inclusive education. Poor service and support make it impossible to operate schools and classrooms as centres of care and support, with a sense that everyone belongs, is accepted, welcome, and supported. If left unattended to, this lack of support for teachers could result in further marginalisation, exclusion, and alienation of disabled learners in the classrooms of these teachers.

The second one is that in South Africa special education has, for many years, been the responsibility of the Directorate Psychological, Guidance and Special Education Services (PGSES). With the new policy of inclusion, educational inclusion has to be an issue for the entire education system. So, seeing the issue of educational inclusion as the issue of PGSES only, and not the business of the entire education system, fails to effect transformation of the entire education system into an inclusive education system where everyone in the

Department of Education works to ensure unrestricted access to those that were denied access before. What this view of locating inclusive education within PGSES only could lead to, is seeing the problem of ableism as an issue for particular sections of society, for particular sections of the education department, for particular schools, for particular learners, for particular teachers, for particular parents, as is the case in this school that disabled learners could only be placed or accommodated in classrooms of particular teachers, and not others.

However, it should be noted that the difficulties that the school experienced did not only reside with their interactions with some departmental officials. Other difficulties resided with certain classification systems within the Department of Education. For instance, teachers were concerned about the criteria that the Department was using to decide whether the school should have a nutrition scheme or not. They felt that their school had been unfairly excluded from the Primary School Nutrition Programme (PSNP), although they had disabled learners whose socio-economic conditions of poverty and under nourishment resembled those of learners in schools which were participating in the nutrition programme. The principal reported that the school had, for numerous occasions, raised this issue with the Department of Education, but the response had always been that according to the decile ranking (Department's ranking), the school does not qualify.

Moreover, according to the narratives of teachers, the major difficulty that the school had had to face was that of an education system which seemed not be ready to support their schools to implement their own policy. In discussing the UK system, Ainscow (1999:99) alludes to the fact that "there is a major problem of how to redesign a system of education that still bears many of the features of the purpose for which it was originally formulated," that of educating those who are 'normal' in mainstream schools and those who are disabled in special schools, and orchestrating all provisioning norms within such framework. The teachers alluded to the same tension in South Africa. Teachers reported that their school had had to face not being able to get teachers who are qualified to deliver a 'curriculum for all'. A 'curriculum for all' is a curriculum that would involve the creation of learning

contexts that reflect and celebrate diversity and create experiences that acknowledge diverse learning rates, levels and styles. This curriculum would be characterised by unrestricted access, non-discrimination, flexibility, participation, responsiveness and sensitivity to the diverse needs of the learner population. The principal reported that the school had had to appoint anyone who, most often, had had to learn along the way. The feeling was that this was putting learners that they were trying to include at further risk of failure.

Furthermore, teachers who participated in this study believed that there were 'powerful' and influential teachers at their school who were positive about the inclusion of disabled learners in their classes. The teachers who participated in this study were all qualified professionals (four at M+3 level and two at M+4 level), who had gone an extra mile to enrol for a one-year Certificate in Special Needs Education in order to improve their knowledge and skills to support disabled learners at their school. It was on this basis, and the experience that they believed they had accrued from the engagements they had had with disabled learners, that these teachers were concerned about the fact that most teachers at other schools did not have adequate knowledge and skills to cater for the wide range of needs. They reported that most of their neighbouring schools were referring disabled children to their school, saying, "Here are they, take them we can't teach them".

In trying to alleviate fears about the future of their learners after grade 4, the school principal, for instance, approached one of their neighbouring senior primary schools with the intention of suggesting to the principal of that school that the two schools hold joint staff development sessions in preparation for the time when their learners would be going to senior primary education at that school. However, one of the teachers participating in the study reported that some of the influential teachers from that school were adamant that "We are not going to be involved with this [teaching disabled learners]", and that was the end of the life of the initiative. Participants felt that there was a need for the Department of Education to introduce programmes to capacitate teachers in the area of accommodating diverse learner needs, as they were uncertain about what would happen to their learners after Grade 4, because they would have to go to other schools whose teachers have not

been trained to accommodate diverse learner needs. They were concerned that their learners would soon drop out during or after Grade 5. They felt, therefore, that the gains achieved in this school would be lost.

However, in-service training of teachers in KwaZulu-Natal has been inadequate and minimal considering the realities involved in delivering a curriculum that takes account of the range of learner needs. Douglas (2005) asserts that most training is conducted through workshops or seminars, often by cascading, which is a technique found by recipients to be insubstantial and unsatisfactory. Teachers participating in this study alluded to this tension. They reported that, firstly, facilitators at the departmental workshops often did not have in-depth understanding of how to go about with what they were doing. They felt that, amongst other things, new ideas were being shoved down teachers' throats without them being given adequate time to consider the nature of the new innovations. Secondly, another issue that teachers raised was the difficulty, and an almost impossibility, that went with being granted a study leave. Teachers felt that taking courses part-time to retrain themselves was very difficult and that "we actually needed to take studies full-time" because they "felt that there are courses we would not be able to do while we are working". They felt that this issue was a barrier that needed to be addressed, as it "disturbs teachers a lot, because some end up developing a negative attitude towards inclusion because they have to sacrifice their own time all the time to learn to help children." For instance one teacher reported that:

"I had to go to Pietermaritzburg to take the courses I was doing ... There is nothing here ... I had to sacrifice my June holidays. I spent all my holidays there ... away from my family ... I wish we could be given at least six months to go to institutions to develop ourselves ..."

The question of the retraining and upgrading of teachers is quite a very important issue for South Africa considering the fact that it is common knowledge that most South African teachers were trained to execute the task of operating schools as an effective support arm of the workings of the apartheid state, the most important aspect of which was to build a

segregated, classist, sexist, racist society. As a result, most South African teachers have in the past not been trained to respond to a wide range of learner needs. As a result, teachers often find it threatening to have to change their tried and tested teaching methodologies to accommodate the learning needs of disabled learners, primarily due to a fear that they might not be able to manage diversity successfully in the classroom. This situation is exacerbated by other related issues. For instance, teachers in this study identified the current learner: teacher ratio of 38:1 for the Province of KwaZulu-Natal as quite stressful to teachers and suggested that a learner: teacher of around 25 to 30:1 would be fairly reasonable for the successful implementation of the policy of inclusive education. As this teacher puts it:

“ ... But if the number is too big, it does not happen properly ... I want to go to Sibongile, Zodwa, Joseph, Albert ... you understand something like that ... that is not possible in an overcrowded class ...”

So, for the Department of Education to be able to address the training issues raised by these teachers, they would have to re-look at the way in which in-service training is being conducted at the moment. In addition to that, the Department of Education would need to take account of the fact that teacher development in the context of educational transformation is far more complex than simply retraining teachers. Teachers must be supported in their efforts towards developing new professional identities (Graven, 2002). For teachers to be able to implement new educational changes they ‘may well need to first shift their own identities, their understanding of who they are and how they relate to others’ (Harley & Parker, 1999:197).

In line with the issues raised by teachers above, narratives of teachers revealed that negative and harmful attitudes towards difference, especially disability, for the majority of teachers at the school, remained a critical barrier to making their school welcoming to all their learners: “We still experience attitudinal problems from us as teachers. They do not want to have anything to do with that child. Others are still looking at it with “What programmes will suit these, this is a real problem”” Teachers believed that, for the successful implementation of

any innovation, it is crucial to first work on issues that breed negative attitudes. The entrenchment of a dual system – special and ordinary – in this school seemed to be rooted in the attitudes of teachers towards disabled persons. The fears that teachers harboured about including disabled learners seemed to be the very cause teachers were finding it difficult to make a shift that the policy envisaged. These fears are expressed in the words of a teacher who was finding it difficult having disabled learners in her class: “Fortunately, the principal said the [disabled] children would be accommodated in other classrooms; they would not be integrated into our classrooms. And thanks God that was going to be the case. People had been praying that “Let them not come to my class.”” This seemed to indicate that although the teachers had basic understanding of what the policy of inclusion required, their fears and attitudes seemed to supersede their understanding.

Negative attitudes towards, marginalisation, exclusion and devaluing of disabled people results from the ‘tissue of myths, fears, and misunderstandings that society attaches to disabled people’ (Murphy, 1995:140). For instance, disabled children have been excluded from receiving formal education in mainstream schools because of the negative assumptions and misconceptions associated with disability. Very often teachers fear the inclusion of a disabled child in their class and respond negatively to their attendance (Department of Education, 1997). A concern about this situation is that negative teacher attitudes towards the disabled may be picked up by the other children and further alienate disabled learners (Department of Education, 1997).

Lastly, when I analysed the two Special Needs Education modules that teachers had done in the one-year certificate course referred to somewhere in this chapter, I learned that although one of the two modules covered in this course was titled *Inclusive Education: Barriers to Learning* respectively, it had hardly been conceptualised according to Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001), as a result, its primary focus, throughout, was disability. Teachers’ voices reflected the influence of this, as they revealed that some teachers saw the issue of educational exclusion and inclusion only in relation to disability. Their views were

not able to “go beyond those of disablement” (Barton, 1999:58). Teachers’ narratives seemed to be dominated by references to disabled learners. Teachers’ voices about able-bodied learners were often silent. For instance, when teachers were asked to suggest features of what they would consider an inclusive school, their responses were littered with phrases and statements such as ‘... you should see signs ... of deaf people ...’; “... there was a child who was wheelchair-bound ...”; “... if we are to accommodate those that are on wheelchairs ...”; “There are children who walk on crutches ...”; “There must also be those who have speech and hearing problems”; “That is why we said every parent who has a disabled child should bring him to the school”. Barton (1999) argues for placing the issue of disability alongside all forms of oppression in a human rights framework. This will facilitate a process of addressing the needs of all learners, assist in developing an equitable education system which echoes and reflects fundamentals of an equitable society (Dyson, 1999). Educational inclusion must be premised on the principle of “education for all pupils” (Slee, 2001:115).

In terms of the South African policy of inclusive education, Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001), disability is not presented as the barrier to learning and development, but as one of the barriers to learning and development that the policy identifies. A number of writers agree that for all learners to be fully accommodated, teachers need to shift from one set of assumptions, beliefs, values, norms, relationships, behaviours and practices to another which entails a fundamental reculturing of teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1994: 255; Hargreaves, 1997: 1; Miller, 1998: 530; Fullan, 1998: 226 cited in Pettipher, 2000).

5.4 The red group, the orange group and the green group: An inclusive curriculum?

Ainscow (1999) argues that arrangements for sorting children into groups or classes based on their assumed abilities to participate in learning, categorisation by disability or learning difficulty remain a common practice in many learning contexts internationally. This practice

has proved to be problematic in a number of ways. For example, The Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and National Committee on Education Support Services (Department of Education, 1997) argues that where educational placement or grouping of learners occurs according to the attachment of a label rather than an assessment of learner and system need, the learner may experience barriers which ultimately result in learning breakdown or exclusion. The focus on ability and performance opens the door for large-scale administration of various standardised tests, which are often administered without questioning the real benefits that would derive from them (Department of Education, 1997). One of the key concerns, which is recognised internationally, is that such tests disadvantage some learners and reinforce existing inequalities in the education system. Even in South Africa, these tests are a great concern as tools for educational placement. This is because categorising learners based on their assumed abilities fails to interrogate factors that may be causing learners to decline in their performance. Performance is just a surface factor – a symptom that all is not well - there are underlying factors that need to be interrogated to get to the bottom of the situation.

As part of my study, I spent three days observing one of the classes at the school. This was a class that had included disabled learners. In this class, children were arranged predominantly according to their assumed abilities to participate in the teaching and learning process. Children were divided into three groups here. I will call these groups the red group, the orange group and the green group. The red group included children seen as having lower ability, who were struggling with many aspects of their work. Moreover, this group also included disabled learners, whom the teacher, when she was talking to me, referred to as “LSEN”, an acronym for learners with special educational needs. Because most disabled learners at the school were over-age, owing to no access in their local mainstream schools, they were just lumped in the red group with the assumption that they were behind with their work. The teacher had organised a small corner, of approximately 4 square metres, for the display of the red group’s work and other learning materials, such as posters, intended for the red group. The corner was boldly labelled “LSEN”. The rest of the classroom walls were allocated for the display of the work of and materials intended for

the other two groups. The orange group comprised children of medium ability, who would do well or do badly depending on their circumstances at a particular point in time. The green group comprised children who were seen as having higher ability, who appeared to have good self-esteem, and were always called upon by the teacher to demonstrate tasks to other children.

The children were clearly aware of how they came to be in their groups. For example, after a spelling task, Khetha broke down and cried. There was absolute quiet in the classroom. When asked why he was crying, he replied still crying, "I do not want to belong to that group anymore. I did not even obtain a single correct answer." When I interviewed the child further, he mentioned that his parents had brought him to this school because he was repeating classes at his previous school. So, he knew why he had been brought to this school, and why the teacher had made him to sit in the red group.

When asked about this arrangement of children, the teacher explained that such grouping makes organisation, planning and teaching easier because "I know exactly who I am dealing with at a particular point in time." All learning and teaching activities were synchronised on the basis of this group arrangement of children. During the entire time I spent there, children never operated outside these groups.

Furthermore, the teacher played a significant role in further stigmatising the red group, by making it known to children who and why they belonged in the red group. For example, Billy, in the green group, was continuously disrupting the class. In order to try and stop this behaviour, the teacher said to him, "If you continue disrupting the class like this, I will be forced to move you to that group," pointing to the direction of the red group. Comments such as this one made it easy for children to identify who belongs to the red group and why. This marked, marginalized and stigmatized learners who belonged to the red group. I also noticed that, for the three days I spent in that class, the teacher would everyday first teach and give tasks to the orange and the green groups, and the red group would be last to receive attention. In the minds of most children, first means important and better, and last

means unimportant and bad. Questions should be asked as to how easy it is for children in the red group to improve their performance and leave the red group. For a child who does not have enough means of control (Quin, 2004) reclaiming their status in the green group is a myth. In a developing context such as South Africa, numerous factors render children vulnerable, as a result, most disabled children who enter the 'red groups' never leave them. For them, the exit door out of the red group is always locked whilst the entrance door is always kept wide open.

In this study, inclusion within the school seemed to be ill-conceived. Typically, disabled learners were present in the classroom, but their participation was limited by the way the class was organised, taught and supported. For instance, in another class that I observed, interaction among learners was not evident. Disabled learners were taught and supported by a regular teacher, with whom the learners would, in most instances, exclusively interact. To all intents and purposes, support that was provided separated disabled learners from the rest of the class: disabled learners were made to sit in their own group, do their own tasks, and communicate solely with the teacher. Grouping was only for organisational purposes, not to allow learners space to assist and support one another. This resulted in the return of the dual system within one class characterised by a special section and an ordinary section of learners. Disabled learners in this class remained "outsiders who have come in from the cold, no longer looking in from the outside, but looking out from the inside" (Sayed, 2002:8).

Ainscow (1999) argues that interactions such as these help to reduce expectations and shape children's views of themselves as learners, and that in so doing, they also discourage participation and learning. In a context, such as this school, that claims to be providing a quality education for all learners, situations such as these, which marginalize, exclude and stigmatize disabled children, are crucial issues that need to be addressed if the goal of opening spaces for all learners is to be achieved.

Contrary to what happened in these two classrooms, in order for teachers to teach and organise their classrooms in a way that accommodates diversity, there needs to be flexibility in classroom organisation. Teachers need to experiment with a range of class groupings. These include mixed ability groups, cross-grade groupings and multi-age groupings. Learners should be regarded as an invaluable resource in the teaching and learning process. This is because learners have diverse backgrounds, differing prior learning experiences, differing cultural experiences, different learning styles and so on. Use of co-operative approaches, based on the thinking that learners learn from each other, would help facilitate this. Co-operative learning involves structuring learning tasks so that learners work in small groups and each learner's efforts contribute to the group's goals (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999). In this sense, learners are the centre of the learning and teaching process, and are seen as a source of knowledge, and the teacher is not the only source.

5.5 Shared vision, a shared covenant?

Manasse asserts that "... to actively change an organization, leaders must make decisions about the nature of the desired state" (Manasse, 1986:151). Leadership requires vision. Vision is a force that provides meaning and purpose to the work of an organisation. Leaders of change are visionary leaders, and vision is the basis of their work.

In this study, teachers frequently referred to the principal as "passionate about things" and "active" in initiating things that aimed to improve the lives of learners, parents and teachers at the school. Effective school leadership is a crucial aspect of the operations of schools, particularly in the implementation of the policy of inclusion. The South African policy of inclusive education, Education White Paper 6, singles out effective school leadership as the cornerstone of the process of developing an inclusive education and training system (Department of Education, 1997; 2001).

Narratives of teachers revealed that it was:

"... the principal of the school who introduced the idea [of including disabled children], looking at the situation at the school."

However, it is important to understand that a school is not just a building with people inside, rather it is a complex organism which requires understanding of the fact that in order to institute change, particularly in schools in developing countries such as South Africa, it is necessary to consider the web of factors that might have an effect on the process of developing inclusive schools. As may be seen in this study, despite having a clear vision of what was to be achieved, there were leadership challenges that the principal still had to face in order to successfully interrogate contextual factors that blocked the school's efforts to improve their school's effectiveness in meeting the needs of disabled learners. The following are some of the factors that still continued to exclude the included disabled learners in the mainstream classes of this particular school.

Firstly, teachers' narratives revealed that the included learners were incorporated in ways that subjected them to the status quo, in ways that expected them to comply with and meet some predetermined standard without their co-operation. As one teacher puts it: "Finally, they will fit in the mainstream classroom." This put the burden of inclusion on the disabled learners, as they were required to "develop necessary capacities to bring them 'up to standard' with those who are already in the system" (Sayed, 2002:9). No systemic adaptations were established to accommodate the interests of disabled learners. This suggests that teachers held a deficit view of disabled learners – that they were there to be 'treated', 'corrected' and 'normalised' – that there was nothing wrong with the anatomy and physiology of the school. The cultural, structural and curricular aspects of the learning institution remained largely uninterrogated, since they were assumed to be appropriate even for the included disabled learners – there was no assumption that the school needed to adapt itself in any way to accommodate the needs of the included disabled children. In essence, schooling did not examine the ideological, political, and economic "needs" of disabled learners (Peters, 1993). That is, disabled learners were seen as being excluded on the basis of their mismatch to 'educational standards', rather than the educational institution being seen as problematic for excluding children in the first place (Slee, 2001). This is quite problematic because it puts disabled learners in a position where access to formal education

is often riddled with elements of exclusion by virtue of their not fitting or needing to conform to cultures in ways that undermine their own cultures.

Secondly, when a thirteen-year old disabled girl was admitted to a Grade 1 class at the school where the current study was conducted, teachers believed that she was supposed to be happy because she was now receiving formal education. It did not occur to them how a thirteen-year old girl would feel being in the same grade as six-year olds. The assumption was that the problems of this learner could be addressed by attending to her academic needs, resulting in an absolute disregard of her social needs. While this goes a long way in redressing certain access issues for this learner, it remains very short-sighted, as it tends to not see the problematic aspects of this kind of inclusion, where disadvantageous ways in which this learner is being 'assimilated' (De Haan, 2000) into the workings of the school, are not interrogated.

Thirdly, there were, for instance, two hundred and seventy Grade 1 learners in this school. This Grade 1 class was accommodated in a school hall, the size of only two standard classrooms. Teachers could hardly walk between rows, because the classroom was so overcrowded that there were no spaces between the rows. Teachers reported that working under these conditions was very frustrating and demotivating, given the fact that they did not know how to deal with the situation. "How are we supposed to 'keep our cool' under such conditions?" is how one teacher expressed her frustration about the situation in the Grade 1 class. Such a situation undermines efforts to transform schools into centres of quality learning for all learners. Questions should be asked about how the principal could have allowed admission of so many children, when she knew very well that the school did not have enough classrooms to accommodate them. This may suggest that the principal's understanding of inclusion was inadequate, because instead of expanding curriculum access for learners, this situation worked to marginalized them, because demotivated, frustrated teachers could hardly be relied upon to provide learners with the necessary support under these conditions. In terms of Section 10 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (Department of Education, 1996), subsection (1) states that "No person may administer

corporal punishment at a school to a learner.” Subsection (2) further states that “Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault.” In the province of KwaZulu-Natal, teachers have been trained on the alternative forms of discipline, and the National Department of Education has published a manual *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: The Learning Experience: A Practical Guide for Educators* (Department of Education, 2000) in order to support the process of developing and maintaining a culture of discipline, dignity and respect in the classroom. However, the turn of events was different in this Grade 1 class. As a possible sign of frustration with the existing conditions in that classroom, a situation occurred, whilst I was there in the classroom, where one of the teachers was severely administering corporal punishment to Grade 1 learners in my presence. For the entire time I spent in that class, the teacher concerned always carried a stick with her. Usually, teachers would not do this in front of a stranger.

Fourthly, the question of the red group as alluded to somewhere in this chapter casts doubt on the leadership and management skills of the principal. The school started taking disabled learners in 2000. Four years later, disabled learners are still lumped in a marginalized, stigmatized red group. When I approached the principal about this, asking why such a situation, that preserved the status of the school as an institution that continue to marginalize disabled learners, was allowed to continue, her response was that it is one of the challenges that the school was facing, and did not know how the situation was going to be addressed. Implementing inclusive education involves complex changes. It is important to note that complex changes require clear long-term plans that detail implementation processes clearly. The absence of detailed plans leads to confusion and uncertainty about whether there really is a serious intention to implement the change initiative. The absence of a clear detailed plan for the implementation of the policy of inclusion in this school might be the reason why, after four years, disabled learners are still lumped in the stigmatised ‘red group’.

For principals who are effective educational change leaders in their schools, a vision is “a hunger to see improvement” all the time (Pejza, 1985), as well as “the force which moulds meaning” (Manasse, 1986:150). The above scenarios suggest that although the principal had a very clear picture of what she wanted the school to accomplish, she did not have the ability to operationalize the vision of an inclusive school. When we bring the question of the “shared vision, shared covenant” into focus, there are crucial questions that spring to the fore regarding the situation in this school. Teachers’ narratives revealed that the school worked “as a team” when a decision was taken to allow disabled children to be admitted at the school. Of course, the shared vision and collaborative working are crucial aspects of leadership as they provide a “shared covenant that bonds together leader and follower in a moral commitment” (Sergiovanni, 1990:24). However, does it matter what kind of vision the school has if such a vision is an extension of the standards of the dominant discourse that preserves the status quo, maintains and safeguards the marginalization and exclusion of disabled learners from effective participation in the schools of their choice?

This brings us to the next point that schools which are striving to become inclusive schools need to take cognisance of, the question of values and beliefs. Values and beliefs are quite important because they affect practice and the way “shared visions, shared covenants” are coined in schools. Values are principles that individual teachers and/or school communities consider to be important or desirable in what they do. For example, respect for, acknowledgement and celebration of difference. Beliefs are ideas considered to be true and on which people are willing to act. For example, believing that mainstream schools need to interrogate conditions under which they open themselves to the admission of disabled children. As values and beliefs form a cornerstone of vision building (Manasse, 1986), it is crucial that they are constantly questioned and interrogated, Fullan (1998) calls this reculturing, to ensure that they are not another mechanism to further marginalize and exclude disabled people.

From the narratives of the school principal, it was clear that she placed a high premium on student learning. As she puts it: “When I became principal at this school, I noticed

something about the attitude of teachers towards their work in the classroom ... Another concern was that children were failing. The failure rate was constantly increasing ... I was concerned about the situation.” This indicates that the principal believed that the school is for all students’ learning, including disabled children, and not only for some learners. However, as can be discerned from the above discussion, there was disjuncture between what the principal believed was the purpose of schools and what was actually happening inside classrooms at the school. The issue of the red, orange and green group remained an unanswered question for the principal and the entire school management. School management was only aware of it after I had pointed it out. According to what they said, this was one of the ways they had thought disabled learners could effectively be included in mainstream classes. This situation of the ‘red group’ supports the arguments put forth by Edwards, Armstrong and Miller (2001) that inclusion is not the binary opposite of exclusion, and that inclusion will not overcome exclusion. Evidence of exclusion will always be found in practices of inclusion. At the time I was there, no alternative had been found to resolve the matter of the ‘red group’.

Teachers mentioned that their school principal “listened to us” and did not brush away their concerns and problems as an ‘attitude’ (Pottas, 2005). Becker, Withycombe, Doyel, Miller, Morgan, DeLoretto, and Aldridge (1971) found that principals of outstanding schools “listened well to parents, teachers, and pupils” (p. 3). This could, as we see in this study, sometimes be problematic, particularly if the underlying issues of what is raised as concerns are not interrogated. The crucial question to ask is what were teachers saying when they said they were not ready to allow disabled learners in their classes? What was done about it? Who was supposed to do something about it? Why was nothing done about it in four years of the inclusion of disabled learners? This is a big question when we take into cognisance the fact that it is now 2005, but disabled learners are still accommodated in the classes of very few teachers at the school.

Pejza asserts that an effective “leader continuously scans the environment noticing where change is needed” (Pejza, 1985:10). Leaders of change are “always testing the limits in an

effort to change things that no one else believes can be changed” (Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989:13). They are proactive because they challenge the status quo of their organisations – they do not accept the rules, regulations, or traditions of their schools that limit their change efforts (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989; Pejza, 1985; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1989). However, in this study, although narratives of teachers reveal that the school, led by principal, took initiative to open the school to the admission of disabled learners prior to the release of the policy of inclusive education in 2001, it is clear that the school did this within the rules, regulations and traditions of the discourse of “teaching disabled learners to be like us” and judging them against the measure of the dominant discourse that sees them as the ‘other’, as outsiders, instead of interrogating ways in which such a discourse closes the door on the faces of disabled learners by not challenging exclusionary practices that deny them the opportunity to participate actively as full members of society. This tells us that the school was aware of the truth that their learner population was not reflective of the demographics of their community, but they did not have adequate knowledge on how to change the workings of the school to create a space for those who were excluded by the school.

The above discussion points to the fact that inclusion is not a once-off event; it is rather a process continuously infested with elements of exclusion.

REFLECTIONS

6.1 Introduction

Since 1994, the new democratic government of South Africa has embarked on a mission to develop an education system that is able to respond to a diverse range of needs of the learner population. The major lesson that could be learned out of this process is that successful implementation of any policy, particularly in a developing context, is not an easy process. It is infested with a myriad of contextual factors.

This chapter will reflect on the ways in which some of these factors impact on the implementation of the policy of inclusive education in South Africa, critically evaluate the scope of the current study and provide recommendations for further research.

6.2 Inclusion/exclusion? Tensions in a developing context

To meet the challenge of ensuring a quality education that meets the needs of all learners, one barrier that needs to be removed, particularly in South Africa, is the perception that inclusive education can be implemented within the current education system with minor changes (Lloyd, 2000). Reasons for this kind of thinking often emanate from the limited financial resources within which most developing countries have to operate. South Africa is no exception to this rule. However, the truth of the matter is that there is no way new policies could be implemented in a context which was originally designed to fulfil very different goals. For instance, the South African education system was originally designed to serve as an arm of the apartheid state machinery. Therefore, for successful implementation of inclusive education policy in South Africa, there needs to be radical changes made on the education system as a whole, because South African society now wants to use the education system for a very different purpose, which is to provide quality education for all their citizens.

As inclusion is not simply an add-on to the current operations of a school or an education system, significant restructuring and reculturing processes need to take place in the area of how teachers do their work. However, there are significant realities that South Africa needs to face up to in order to achieve this imperative. One of the major challenges that South Africa faces is the re-training and upgrading of the teacher cadre in order to enable them to provide quality education for all learners. Teachers and their work are one of the crucial ingredients of the successful implementation of the new policy of inclusive education. The responsibility of making the imperatives of the policy of inclusive education visible in the South African schools and classrooms rests, to a significant extent, on the shoulders of teachers who are often ill-equipped for this very important task. To move from frying pan to fire, the reality is that the majority of South African teachers were trained to sustain the workings of the apartheid state, the most important of which was to build a segregated, classist, sexist, racist society. As a result, most South African teachers have in the past not been trained to respond to a wide range of barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 1997; 2001), including disability. Neither have most of them been equipped to understand and respond to other aspects of diversity within the learner population, for example, those with exceptional ability, living and affected with HIV and AIDS, who abuse substances, who have been traumatised by violence, who come from unstable family conditions, and so on. As a result, they often find it threatening to have to change their tried and tested teaching methods to accommodate disabled children – they have a fear of not being able to manage diversity in the classroom (Department of Education, 1997). This suggests that there is a general lack of adequate knowledge, skills and training in the teaching cadre for the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy. Lack of appropriate training to equip teachers to deal with such diversity has not only disadvantaged many learners, but has often also left teachers feeling inadequate and demoralised.

It must be remembered that developed countries often have the resources to address these challenges. But the reality is different for developing countries such as South

Africa. They cannot ignore these realities in their efforts to work to meet international standards of education provision. This is what possibly part of what makes policy implementation processes rather more difficult in developing contexts.

6.3 Placing the current study under the lens

It is important to critically evaluate a study in order to be able to justify conclusions and gain perspectives regarding the implications of the findings that emerge.

The major limitation of this study is that data was collected from a few teachers who are from a restricted geographical area. As a result, their responses and views may not be representative of the majority of other teachers from other areas, especially the most socially and economically deprived areas in South Africa. However, it is crucial to unequivocally indicate that it was not the purpose of this study to generalise findings to other contexts, but to reveal certain patterns regarding the different ways in which teachers position themselves within socially constructed discourses of disability and inclusion.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

It is of critical importance to realise that the current study was undertaken in the early years of the implementation of the new policy of inclusive education in South Africa. Further changes in policy and practical implementation of the policy may change the scope of research in this regard. Based upon the findings of the current study, the following recommendations for further research are made:

- Expansion of the current research theme to other parts of South Africa, especially historically deprived contexts.
- Research in order to determine to what extent goals of teacher training (pre-service and in-service) are attained in order to ensure adequate provision for disabled learners.
- Research on dominant, discursive constructions by teachers of inclusion, learning difficulty, and disability.

- Research on dominant, discursive constructions of parents and/or caregivers of their experience of having their disabled child in a mainstream setting.
- Research dominant, discursive constructions by teachers and learners of the inclusion of learners with disability.

6.5 Conclusion

A number of school reform initiatives in South Africa have led to the call for the restructuring and reculturing of education relative to disabled children, in order to include in school and community life those children who, in the past, have been excluded. This calls for communities to build a school environment whereby the needs of every child are accommodated and success is fostered for all. This means that all children irrespective of the type or severity of their perceived educational, physical or psychological challenge are valued; and school personnel, departmental officials, family members, friends and the community at large work together to develop and support caring learning communities that acknowledge and celebrate difference.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview schedule: Teachers

Introductory comments

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this interview. Can I first of all assure you that all sessions will remain strictly anonymous and their records will be treated with the strictest confidentiality, no records thereof will be kept with your name on them. Any report based on the findings of this study will not identify individuals. If any information you give is used in a report or presentations, all information that could identify you to anyone else will be removed or altered to protect your anonymity. Our conversations will be tape recorded so that I can analyse what was said later. The results of the conversations will be used as part of my M Ed, which is attempting to understand your schooling experiences in an ordinary/mainstream primary school. All the information you give is **voluntary**, and you are at liberty not to respond to any questions that you do not feel comfortable responding to. If at any time you would like to halt the conversation then please feel free to do so. I request you to please answer the questions as openly and honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. I need YOUR views.

1. To which age group do you belong?
2. What is your nationality?
3. What is your rank at this school?
4. What are your qualifications?
5. How do your current studies fit in with what you want to achieve at this school and community?
6. How long have you been teaching?
7. How long have you been teaching at this school?
8. Have you taught other grades other than the grade that you are teaching?
9. Before you came to this school, did you have any interaction with a disabled person in your life?

10. Can you briefly tell me how the idea of including disabled learners came about?
11. How did you feel the first time you heard about this from the principal?
12. What would you say are the most important barriers to learning experienced by learners at this school?
13. In your opinion, do you think that your school is ready to face up to these problems or there are still areas that the school still needs to improve on?
14. In your opinion, do disabled children really have a right to be educated in mainstream schools?
15. What leadership role do you see yourself playing in helping disabled learners enjoy their right to be educated in mainstream schools?
16. Do you think that other teachers from mainstream schools should accept inclusion and support it as a sound educational practice?
17. What would you say you have done as a school to ensure that disabled learners are fully supported and accommodated, that is, what would you advise a person who wants to include disabled learners in their school to ensure that it is in place?
18. In your opinion, as a teacher, what challenges are you facing in trying to include all learners and making the school an inclusive school?
19. Your school has been accommodating children with disabilities for some time now... I think as from 2000? Which parts of this project of including disabled learners would you say have worked well?
20. What parts of this project would you say have not worked well, that is, which require a rethink?
21. Would you say the school has benefited anything from the practice of including disabled learners, how has it helped teachers, how has it helped other learners, how has it helped the community at large?
22. Accommodating disabled learners and other learners experiencing other barriers to learning is an idea that comes from Education White Paper 6, would you say that including disabled learners in your school has helped the school or teachers to better understand EWP 6 and how they could implement it?

23. In your opinion, what would you say the school has done to ensure that disabled learners are adequately included, and that they benefit in every manner from the education provided by the school?
24. Has a TST been established at the school? Are you a member of the TST? Do you think a TST is an important structure for a school to have?
25. Would you say all the children in your school have access to the curriculum? Would you say that the school's curriculum could be labelled as a 'curriculum for all'? Expatiate.
26. What strategies do you employ to ensure that all your learners have access to the curriculum, particularly those that are experiencing barriers to learning?
27. If you look at C2005 based on the outcomes based education and the fact that all learners should have access to learning, would you say that accommodating disabled children in the school has helped teachers to include all the learners even those that were in the classroom but were not accessing or benefiting anything from the curriculum?
28. Do you feel that the inclusion of disabled learners in your class has helped you to learn more practical ways, that is, to expand your horizons, in terms of e.g. new teaching methodologies, new forms of assessment, etc. of overcoming barriers to learning in your classroom?
29. What challenges would you say are still facing the school in terms of being able to include all the learners?
30. What would you say should come first when a person has to develop into an inclusive teacher – would you say it's change of attitude or acquiring of skills and knowledge?
31. Would you say that disabled learners are socially acceptable by their able-bodied peers? Give examples.
32. Do you feel that disabled learners benefit from inclusion in a mainstream classroom? What would they have lost if they were in special schools?
33. What would say are the difficulties or challenges that disabled children who are included in the mainstream schools have to face?

34. How do you think other people, particularly your colleagues, think of disability?
35. What do you think make your attempts to include learners easy at this school?
What is it that makes it possible for things to happen?
36. How do you view disability? Expatiate.
37. Do you think there is still room for improvement as far as your view is concerned?

Closing comments

Thank you very much for helping me and giving up your time. Can I finally ask you if you think there is any aspect of your experience that has not been covered in this interview?

I thank you.

Appendix 2: Interview schedule: Principal

Introductory comments

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this interview. Can I first of all assure you that all sessions will remain strictly anonymous and their records will be treated with the strictest confidentiality, no records thereof will be kept with your name on them. Any report based on the findings of this study will not identify individuals. If any information you give is used in a report or presentations, all information that could identify you to anyone else will be removed or altered to protect your anonymity. Our conversations will be tape recorded so that I can analyse what was said later. The results of the conversations will be used as part of my M Ed, which is attempting to understand your schooling experiences in an ordinary/mainstream primary school. All the information you give is **voluntary**, and you are at liberty not to respond to any questions that you do not feel comfortable responding to. If at any time you would like to halt the conversation then please feel free to do so. I request you to please answer the questions as openly and honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. I need YOUR views.

1. To which age group do you belong?
2. What is your nationality?
3. What is your rank at this school?
4. What are your qualifications?
5. How do your studies fit in with what you want to achieve at this school and community?
6. How long have you been teaching?
7. How long have you been teaching at this school?
8. Have you taught other grades other than grade three?
9. Before you came to this school, did you have any interaction with a disabled person in your life?
10. Can you briefly tell me how the idea of including disabled learners came about?

11. How did you feel the first time you had a disabled child in your school?
12. What would you say are the most important things that have helped you to develop to this stage?
13. What would you say are the most important barriers to learning experienced by learners at this school?
14. In your opinion, do you think that your teachers have accepted inclusion as a sound educational practice?
15. What would you say are the challenges you are facing as a principal in trying to build an inclusive school community?
16. Your school has been accommodating disabled learners for quite some time now, which parts of this project would you say have worked well and why?
17. In your opinion, what advice would you give to a person who would like to make his/her own school inclusive? What are preconditions for this?
18. What would you say are the most important things you have done as a school to ensure that disabled learners are fully supported and accommodated, and that they are benefiting from the educational provision offered by the school?
19. Teachers report that you are involved in a number of programmes as a trainer and facilitator, can you briefly explain how you balance the work that you do as a principal and the work that you do as a trainer/facilitator.
20. Teachers I have spoken to tell me that you are a member of the TST. I want to know from you, what benefits does that have for you as principal?
21. If we may move to the issue of the school curriculum, in your own assessment, would you say that your school curriculum is a 'curriculum for all'?
22. Would you say that the school has benefited anything from the practice of including disabled learners, how has it helped teachers, how has it helped other learners, how has it helped the community at large?
23. In your opinion, as a principal, in what has this practice of including disabled learners helped you to learn new ways of leading and managing the school?
24. If we look at the process of including learners, there are indications that learners to be included should be somehow prepared for this in some way or another, and

those that were already within the system should also be prepared somehow, teachers should also be prepared somehow. Could you share some of your experiences around that, if any?

25. In terms of the law, principals are supposed to have a teaching load. I want to ask you how have you used the knowledge and skills you have gained as a classroom teacher to support your teachers in handling this innovation of including disabled learners?
26. I heard some teachers referring to a community rehabilitation facilitator, could you briefly expatiate about the role of this person in this project, that is, how does this person fit into what you do as a school in including disabled learners?
27. Many teachers I spoke to isolate your leadership as a factor that makes the school to progress in the way it is doing. In your own terms, how would you describe your leadership?
28. If you could share with me your vision of the school regarding inclusive education, where would you like the school to be, say in five years time?
29. Maybe if I could ask who or what do you regard as the school's most important resource that could make the inclusion vision a reality? What or who would that be? Why?
30. My own opinion is that successful inclusion requires clear and effective implementation processes. If you could describe implementation processes or plans which have been set up here, how would you say they work, what are the challenges around their functioning, if there are any?
31. The process of including disabled learners in mainstream education is regarded by many as a risky business. People say, "What will happen if..." Did you, in thinking about it, ever felt that you were taking a risk that might backfire some time? And if so, how did you deal with those feelings? Do you feel that you would again take such a risk in future? If not, what helped you to be so brave?
32. What projects or programmes do you have, if any, that are running at the school which are trying to support the whole notion of 'education for all'?

33. Would you say disabled learners have benefited more than they would have here than in a special school?
34. Would you say that those who are not disabled have benefited from the inclusion of disabled learners? In what ways?
35. How do you view disability? Do you think there is still room for improvement in as far as your view is concerned?

Closing comments

Let me take this opportunity to thank you very much for helping me and giving up your time. Can I finally ask you if you think there is any aspect of your experience that has not been covered in this interview?

I thank you.

Appendix 3: Consent: School Governing Body

The Chairperson

School Governing Body

[Name of school]

Newcastle

2950

As I earlier indicated in our interactions, I am studying towards a Master of Education (Social Justice in Education). As part of my degree requirements I have to complete a research project. My research project entails listening to the voices of teachers and the school principal in order to try and understand their experiences of inclusion and exclusion. I request that I be allowed to complete my research project at the school, using the school principal, teachers and learners as participants in my study. The reason for both the school and participants is both accessibility and history of the school in integrating previous excluded groups of learners. During the research process, I will not use any teaching time. I plan to use mornings and afternoons to collect data from the learners and teachers.

I wish to unequivocally state that participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to refrain from participating in the project at any time they wish to. I will, at all times, endeavour to protect the anonymity of the children and teachers participating in the project. Moreover, kindly be assured that data collected from this interaction will only be used for purposes of my Master of Education, and can only be used for other purposes only after the participants have granted permission to that effect.

This project is being conducted with the full knowledge of my lecturer and supervisor – Prof A Muthukrishna- based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

EJ Ngcobo

Appendix 4: Consent: Teachers

Dear colleague

I, Edward Jabulani Ngcobo, am currently conducting a research study as part of my Masters Degree in Social Justice. I hereby request that I be allowed to conduct my research project at your school. My research study entails listening to the voices of teachers, learners (both disabled and nondisabled) and principal of [name of school] in order to try to understand their experiences of inclusion and exclusion. In order to access this information, I will be asking learners, teachers and principal questions around their experiences at the school. Kindly be assured that data collected from this interaction will only be used for my M Ed, and can only be used for other purposes only after the participants have granted permission to that effect. I, therefore, require your permission to participate in the study. Please complete, date and return the form below to me.

This study is being conducted with the permission of the School Governing Body.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Researcher

EJ Ngcobo

Principal

[Name of Principal]

.....
.....

The contents and nature of this study have been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part.

I understand that I am at free to withdraw at any time, and that a decision to withdraw or not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....