

The Complexities of Educational Policy Dissemination in the South  
African Context: A Case Study of Teachers' Experiences of Inclusive  
Education Policy in Selected Schools in Greater Durban

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work. It has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other university.



Sithabile Ntombela

## DEDICATION

To Zanda, Khanya and Afika, my children, and,  
to Magnate, my husband and soulmate.

You are the wind beneath my sails!

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## ABSTRACT

The study reported in this thesis is a qualitative case study of teachers' experiences of the dissemination of *Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education - Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* in two districts in the Greater Durban area, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Located in three primary schools, the study aimed to examine the process adopted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to disseminate the policy and prepare schools (mostly teachers and other stakeholders) for its implementation, by 1) investigating teachers' understandings and experiences of the policy and the concept of inclusive education in three primary schools, 2) examining the factors that impact on the teachers' understandings of the innovation; and 3) investigating the teachers' views regarding the nature of support provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and its sub-systems: the Greyville and Shelley Beach districts and the schools themselves to prepare for the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

Data analysis in the study is informed by social constructionism as the overarching framework, as well as the systems theory and the theory of innovation diffusion. In addition, two conceptual frameworks are also used, the philosophy of inclusion and re-culturing. These are used as lenses to understand the nature of teachers' understandings of the policy and concept of inclusive education, and the ways in which the province is diffusing the innovation, and preparing and supporting teachers for the implementation of inclusive education in their schools and classrooms.

Findings from the study suggest that the teachers had very limited, varied and often distorted understandings of the policy and the innovation. Their understandings suggested that instead of the paradigm shift warranted by the new policy, most of them still relied heavily on the old deficit, medical model of educating learners with special educational needs. The findings suggest that this might be because of the inadequate and inappropriate strategies that were utilised to disseminate information about the new policy among stakeholders, as well as the inadequate communication between and among the different sectors of the education system.

The study concludes that the policy initiation process needs to become more inclusive to enable stakeholders to embrace the agenda and to understand its purpose; that a new policy is not able to challenge and change the culture of practice unless people are assisted to evaluate and question their practice, to unlearn the old and learn new ways of doing; and that the system needs to break down walls that separate levels and directorates in order to make communication between and within sub-systems more effective.

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations used

CES:	Chief Education Specialist
DBST:	District-Based Support Team
EWP 6:	Education White Paper 6
ILST:	Institution-Based Support Team
INSET:	In-service Education and Training
LoLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
NCESS:	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET:	National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training
OBE:	Outcomes-Based Education. A system of education which acknowledges learner diversity and states that learning does not happen at the same pace for all learners.
PGSES:	Psychological, Guidance and Special Education Services
PRESET:	Pre-service Education and Training
SASA:	South African Schools Act, 1996.
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMILE:	St Mary's Interactive Learning Experience
SMT:	School Management Team

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction and Overview

*A social system is a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal. A system has structure, defined as the patterned arrangements of units in a system, which gives stability and regularity to individual behavior in a system. The social and communication structure of a system facilitates or impedes the diffusion of innovations in the system. One aspect of social structure is norms, the established behavior patterns for the members of a social system (Rogers, 2003: 37).*

### 1. 1 Introduction

In October 1996 the South African Ministry of Education appointed a National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (hereafter referred to as NCSNET) and a National Committee on Education Support Services (hereafter referred to as NCESS). The NCSNET and the NCESS were tasked “to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of ‘special needs and support services’ in education and training in South Africa” (Department of Education, 2001a:5). They were assigned to investigate and advise the Ministry of Education on how to develop a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of the learner population (Department of Education, 1997). Having completed their investigation, the two committees identified numerous factors that cause barriers to learning and development, factors that could be located within learners, within centres of learning, within the wider system of education or within the broader social, economic, and political contexts. Their report, however, shifted focus from those factors within the learner, to factors within the education system and schools, and concluded that it is the latter factors that tend to act as barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 1997:12). They

concluded that these factors prevent some learners from accessing the curriculum or other learning resources, thereby causing the affected learners to experience a breakdown in learning.

While the report identifies a wide variety of factors that interfere with the learning process and lead to this subsequent learning breakdown and exclusion from classroom participation or from school itself, South African education policies have historically tended to endorse the assumption that only a small proportion of learners have unmet educational needs requiring support or specialised programmes in order to learn (Department of Education, 1997). This assumption has led to the notion of Learners with Special Education Needs (hereafter referred to as LSEN) becoming a term that categorises all those learners who, for one reason or another, do not fit into the mainstream system (Department of Education, 1997:11). Such labelling locates the problem with the affected learners, rather than with the school, the teachers, or society. It is only recently that this assumption and its consequences have been challenged.

Additionally, social issues and the language of instruction have had an impact on the quality of education learners receive. For example, Mittler (1999) maintains that schools are sometimes unaware of the fact that, without additional support, the majority of learners who come from deprived home environments do not benefit much from schooling. In South Africa, for example, schools tend to downplay the fact that – for many children – the negative impact of HIV and AIDS, orphaning, and poverty renders many of them susceptible to scholastic failure. In addition, the use of English as a

language of learning and teaching (hereafter referred to as LoLT) places them at a further disadvantage. In such contexts, teachers tend to have lower expectations of learners whose first language is not English. This may stem from the assumption that those learners whose dialogue has been silenced because they are not participants in the culture of power (Delpit, 1995) have little or no capacity to learn. Their low expectations of these learners tend to reinforce discriminatory social conditions (UNESCO, 1998) and, in the process, limit learners' opportunities to learn and develop. Research findings suggest that these low expectations result in self-fulfilling prophecies (Moletsane, 1998a; Mittler, 1999; Sefa Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2003), in which the learners – in turn – perform poorly.

To address the above, the Department of Education (1997) concluded that the priority for education systems in democratic countries – especially a country such as South Africa where educational problems have been exacerbated by Apartheid policy – is to provide all learners with quality education to enable them to reach their full potential. This also ensures that learners become adults who contribute meaningfully to, and participate actively in their society throughout their lives. This becomes possible if education systems foster equal learning opportunities for all learners (ibid), and promote an attitude of 'zero tolerance' for all obstacles to children's learning that could lead to under-achievement, marginalisation, and social exclusion (Mittler, 1999: 6).

To achieve this ideal, the South African Ministry of Education has adopted an inclusive education policy: *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education - Building an*

*Inclusive Education and Training System* (hereafter, EWP6), which emanated from the report of the NCSNET and NCESS. This policy commits the Department of Education to providing “quality education for all learners” (Department of Education, 1997:11). By implication, such an education responds to learners’ needs, provides learning support, acknowledges differences among learners, and maximises learner participation in the culture and curriculum of educational institutions. In this context, quality education is a vehicle for promoting participation and equality in our society, the lack thereof being instrumental in promoting inequality. In today’s knowledge-based societies, it is often the case that those who get a good educational foundation become life-long learners and remain economically active, whereas those without a good base in education become marginalised and fall behind (UNESCO, 1998). As spaces for preparing young people for this knowledge-based society, schools are greatly influenced by what happens in the societies they serve and tend to embrace the same or similar values and priorities (Hegarty, 1994; Ainscow, 1999). According to Delpit (1995), schools – taking their lead from wider society – might even promote and maintain stereotyping. It is in response to these realities that inclusive education seeks to develop an inclusive society where all people are valued and encouraged to participate.

In order to achieve this, however, several prerequisites need to be met, the most important of these being teacher development to facilitate the changes needed to create inclusive classrooms. As the most important agents for policy implementation and change, teachers need not only to fully embrace the innovation, but also to develop adequate knowledge and skills to implement it. It is in this vein that Fullan with

Stiegelbauer (1991) assert that it is teachers' thoughts and actions that are crucial in bringing about educational change. Changing teachers' actions without changing the way they think about how they conduct the business of education will not produce sustainable changes. That is why De Brabandere (2005: 7) emphasises the need to change twice, changing the reality of your situation as well as your perception thereof.

This thesis is informed by the notion that teachers are the central figures in education reforms, and because change is a very personal experience, they must be allowed space to make these changes as they construct their own meaning of what the changes mean. It makes sense, then, to provide them with all the necessary knowledge about the intended innovation, and to create opportunities where they can engage in debates and discussions until they reach a common understanding of the rationale, the content, and even the processes behind the shift. Their subsequent actions will depend on whether they are given new skills to enable them to carry out the objectives of the innovation. In order for inclusive education to be successful, skills will be needed that will equip teachers to provide all learners with quality education and unlimited opportunities to succeed in learning.

It is this vital aspect of the new dispensation, namely teachers' understanding and experiences of the introduction and dissemination of EWP6, and the availability of opportunities for teachers to learn about the proposed changes related to it, that is the focus of this study. The study investigates ways in which teachers in three primary schools in the Greater Durban area experience the dissemination and introduction of

the new policy of inclusion in schools; understanding, interpreting, and experiencing the new policy; and the extent to which they feel adequately prepared and supported for their new role in its implementation.

## **1.2 A brief background to EWP6**

At the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, one of the main items on the agenda was inclusive education. Four years later, in Spain, the World Conference on Special Education<sup>1</sup> declared inclusion as a right, and re-emphasised the need to make regular schools accessible to children with special needs as a means of developing an inclusive society and attaining education for all (UNESCO, 1994). The central principle of the conference was inclusion. At this conference, the need to foster the development of schools that “include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs” was acknowledged (UNESCO, 1994: iii). The conference delegates proclaimed that all children have a right to education and opportunities to achieve; that each child has different abilities, interests, and learning needs; that systems of education and educational programmes need to be structured to accommodate these differences, and that regular schools need to become – through a child-centred pedagogy – accessible to children with special educational needs in order to meet their learning needs (UNESCO, 1994).

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<sup>1</sup> Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994)



The delegates agreed that to achieve such a responsive system of education would require regular schools with inclusive inclinations to provide quality education to the majority of learners. Such schools were seen as effective in fighting discriminatory attitudes, in creating communities that are welcoming, in building a society that is inclusive, and in achieving education for all (ibid: viii-ix). The delegates went a step further and called on governments to adopt inclusive education policies and to invest in the early identification of learning difficulties and intervention strategies in order to minimise the exclusion of certain children from education (ibid). Similarly, four years later, UNESCO declared that it views inclusive education as a means of combating school wastage and of challenging discriminatory attitudes (UNESCO, 1998).

With this view in mind, the post-apartheid Ministry of Education set out to transform the education system. This occurred within the context of a long history of racial segregation and inequality promoted by apartheid policies, a legacy of an ailing economy, racial inequality, and a poorly educated population. All these necessitated that the government look for ways in which education – a tool previously used to entrench these ills – could be used to remedy the effects of apartheid and provide equal opportunities for all – inclusive education fitted the bill.

### **1.2.1 The inclusive education movement in the South African context**

Although the inclusive education movement started in first-world countries, Dyson and Forlin (1999) argue that it has spread its wings across the globe with most developing countries embracing it as a solution to their inadequate special education services. This

was confirmed by delegates' reports at a 1999 workshop on Human Resource Development<sup>2</sup> in Uganda, which suggested that although inclusion was not yet policy in their countries, most of them were moving towards inclusive education policies.

Within the South African context, a dual system of well-resourced and under-resourced schooling has co-existed since apartheid times. Schools that were previously reserved for whites only, tend to boast school facilities of a first-world standard, whereas those that were for black Africans continue to have inferior or no resources at all. For example, black African schools tend to have inadequate learner support materials, and inadequately qualified teachers, to name only a few aspects. In townships, and in rural areas, particularly, most schools do not have playground facilities. As a result, learners cannot take part in extra-mural activities, which limits their opportunities to learn and explore different sports' codes. In comparison, schools that were built for white learners have extensive sporting facilities. These differences become significant when learners' special needs have to be met.

Apart from racial inequalities, there are other sites of disempowerment or disadvantage that affect the teaching and learning process in South African schools. For example, the preferred use of English as a LoLT continues to marginalise learners whose first language is not English (Department of Education, 1997) as they may be reluctant to interact in a language they are not fluent in (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:116). In addition, social and economic disadvantages such as parental unemployment, poor

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<sup>2</sup> Human Resource Development in Support of Inclusive Education, sponsored by UNESCO. Delegates came from Ethiopia, Finland, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

nutrition, poor living conditions, and poor health, including HIV/ AIDS, also prevent many learners from critically engaging in the learning process (Mittler, 2000; Department of Education, 1997). Schools that serve such communities usually lack resources, struggle to recruit and keep qualified teachers, have higher teacher-learner ratios, with the result that the quality of teaching and learning is negatively affected (Department of Education, 1997). Obviously, because of these factors, the development of an integrated inclusive system of education has become an urgent – albeit complex – matter, hence the commission of the NCSNET and NCESS.

Since there were many overlaps in their briefs, the committee and the commission ended up working together to produce a common report entitled: “Quality Education for All: Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development” (Department of Education, 1997). This report acknowledges that existing inequalities in educational resources in different parts of the country pose serious obstacles to the new government’s attempts to develop an integrated system of education (ibid). As the report suggests, these inequalities highlight the need to develop schooling practices that are context-bound, because importing practices from vastly different contexts can prove fruitless (Ainscow, 1999). In view of this, the report lists several key requirements of a context-bound inclusive education and training system.

Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001) are convinced that such a system needs to; first, provide different learning sites within one integrated education and training system, as well as a variety of support modes in response to diverse learner needs within the curriculum.

Second, it needs to include institutional development strategies that will create a welcoming and supportive environment for learning and teaching. Third, a community-based support system needs to be created that develops the capacity of all levels of the education system to respond to diverse learner needs. Fourth, the new system needs to support human resource development and provide financial resources to carry out the vision. Fifth, it needs to facilitate the development of a three-level support system consisting of: school-based support teams; district-based support teams, and provincial and/or national administrative supports. Furthermore, a training and support programme is needed, which is designed to develop human resources and provide appropriate financial and other resources for the implementation of the support system. Finally, the creation of an implementation strategy to take care of arrangements during the transition period is vital (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 312-313).

If these requirements are met, the government will have succeeded in facilitating the implementation of an inclusive education and training system. However, as Donald et al (2002) caution, there are serious challenges ahead. One of these challenges is the assurance of quality in curriculum delivery to ensure that barriers are identified and addressed promptly. Another is the developing of an efficient system of support services that can provide quality support to teachers, schools, learners and parents. Although the plan is to convert special schools into resource centres so that they assume a new role of providing support as part of district-based support team, this too will pose a challenge. These issues are addressed more fully in **Chapter Two** where the need for a paradigm shift is highlighted and its challenges tabled. In **Chapter**

**Three**, I argue that inclusion goes far deeper than merely switching from one form of service provision to another.

By locating learning breakdown in the rigid, unresponsive ways in which schools are organised, inclusion challenges the education system to be creative and to vary its response to the different needs of consumers (Parsons, 1999:182). Inclusion also seeks to usher in a season of hope, which encourages equality of opportunity, removes barriers and opens doors (ibid) in terms of learning opportunities and resources for all learners. However, the shift from the old and familiar to the new and unfamiliar is never easy, nor is it smooth. Naicker (1999) believes that the envisaged paradigm shift from special needs education to inclusive education is rather complex, demanding unconditional commitment to integration at all levels of the education system. It also requires that practitioners understand the old as well as new “assumptions, theories and practises” (ibid: 67) that underpin both, so that they do not bring the old into the new framework. These things are much easier to put into words than into practice. In relation to this, by analysing educators’ perceptions and experiences of this policy in this study I have been able to examine the degree to which the shift from the old to the new has actually evolved.

### **1.3 Rationale for the research project**

Multiple rationales have drawn me to this study. These derive from personal, experiential, academic drive and policy. First, I have an interest in, and have worked

with, learners who experience difficulties in learning. As a school-based teacher, I had many years of involvement in regular and special education, during which I observed teachers exhibit a lot of fear, lack of understanding, and sometimes indifference directed at those learners who – for a variety of reasons – were seen as different. As a teacher in a special school for learners with severe mental disabilities, I was often asked by my friends teaching in mainstream schools why I was wasting time working in a school where learners had no future. The derogatory terminology often used to refer to learners experiencing severe learning difficulties revealed the attitude/s many regular school teachers had about such learners. Sometimes, I heard these teachers priding themselves on the fact that they were very unsympathetic in their treatment of learners who were less able to do the set tasks. I do not doubt that some of those learners dropped out of school as a result of the corporal punishment (e.g. caning when it was still allowed) they received, or the absence of support from such teachers.

This discrimination, lack of understanding, and indifference, still continues in spite of what experience constantly teaches us, that everybody is unique and should, therefore, be treated equally. Learners bring different experiences and/or competencies, (educational) needs and expectations to the learning situation because each individual is different. Moletsane (1998a) cites age, culture, language, prior learning, religion, and gender as some of the sources of learner differences that teachers should be aware of. She adds that this diversity is something to be celebrated and used to benefit all learners, not to be viewed as a deficiency or an obstacle to the learning process (ibid).

Second, for my graduate studies, I was fortunate to get a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom where I learnt about, and saw, a lot of work aimed at including learners who were different from the 'norm'. This experience left me wishing that this movement would reach South Africa as – at that time – I was already in the teaching profession, and knew how under-developed and under-resourced African communities and their schools were. I saw inclusion as a way out of the shortages affecting African children. In my experience, I had seen that a lack of resources had forced African primary school teachers to work with diversity in their classrooms, as there were no separate facilities for learners with special needs. And, I was naïve enough to think that these teachers had acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to support diverse learning needs. However, I was wrong. At the time, this thinking was reinforced by a research study I was doing for my dissertation, wherein I investigated procedures used to identify learners experiencing learning difficulties, and how teachers intervened in such cases (Ntombela, 1993). From my analysis of data collected, I concluded that teachers were, without training or support, able to identify learners who were struggling and that they often devised strategies to support them (ibid). This made me conclude that this situation of inclusion, by default, had made them aware of learners' different needs, and that when the inclusion movement reached our shores, they would be ready to embrace it.

Third, as a lecturer involved in teacher education, I am based in the discipline of Educational Psychology and, naturally, my research and teaching interests are in the field of inclusive education. As a result, I keep a close eye on developments in

education, particularly in special education services. In 1997 I did some work for the NCESS, and in 2000 I was involved in the National Inclusive Education Pilot in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. It was from these experiences that my earlier assumptions about teachers' knowledge and skills to address diversity in their classrooms were rendered obsolete. It soon dawned on me that extensive professional and institutional development and support would be required before all teachers and schools changed to become truly responsive to all learning needs.

When EWP6 was published and adopted in July 2001, I was excited. However, as I interacted with students doing in-service courses in 2001 and 2002, I realised that they had no knowledge or even awareness of inclusive education. It was clear that this policy was not being implemented yet, and that teachers had no knowledge of the imminent changes in policy. I knew that the Department of Education had given itself 20 years, starting from 2001, to change the present exclusionary system into an inclusive one, and I became curious to see what was being changed. I wanted to know how the ministry was going about introducing teachers to the new, inclusive way of thinking and doing, and also how teachers were being trained and supported to change their practices. In addition, since the old apartheid paradigm had dominated educational provision and teacher training courses for so long, I also wanted to see what strategies were being used to help them unlearn past learning and embrace new thinking.



## 1.4 The study

Inclusive education has been on the international agenda as far back as the early '90s, with extensive research being conducted in first-world countries around the development of inclusive systems of education (UNESCO, 1994; Booth, 1996; Rouse & Florian, 1996; Ainscow, 1999; Ballard, 1999; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Barton, 2000; Dyson & Millward, 2000; Slee, 2000; Tait & Purdie, 2000; Doyle, 2002; Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004), but in developing countries – such as South Africa – it is still a fairly new concept, and very little research has been conducted in this area.

Among the few available studies are those documenting the inclusion of learners with disabilities (Jairaj, 1997; Muthukrishna, Farman & Sader, 2000; Engelbrecht, Swart & Eloff, 2001; Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher & Oswald, 2004); the experiences of integration (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002), the ways in which special educational needs are addressed or not addressed (Ntombela, 1993, 1997, 2003); and the conceptualisation of barriers to learning, development, and participation (Department of Education, 1997; Naicker, 1999; Department of Education, 2001a). Other literature focuses on the theoretical framework for developing inclusive schools (Engelbrecht, 1999; Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 1999; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001), teacher training, and teacher readiness, or lack thereof, to implement inclusive education (Forlin & Engelbrecht, 1998; Engelbrecht et al, 2001; Hay, Smit & Paulsen, 2001). A gap seems to exist with regard to literature that examines the actual experiences of teachers, who are the key levers of policy implementation, in the introduction and diffusion of information about inclusive education.

For this reason, my research study focuses on teachers' experiences of this policy in three primary schools. These schools fall under the administration of three wards, three circuits and two district offices (Greyville and Shelley Beach<sup>3</sup>) around the Greater Durban area. The study is primarily designed to investigate teachers' experiences and their understanding of this new policy statement as captured in EWP6. In addition, it seeks to examine ways in which information is being disseminated from the Department of Education to prepare schools and teachers for the pending implementation process. The role played mostly by the district, and – in some ways the province – in disseminating necessary information and in equipping teachers for the new task of developing inclusive classrooms and schools is also investigated. Because the district is the most powerful level of administration in the system, the study also focuses on teachers' experiences of working with districts, particularly the district's role in informing and supporting schools and teachers around inclusive education. My assumption was that if teachers felt adequately knowledgeable about the policy and its intentions and were sufficiently supported in their preparation for putting this policy into practice, their confidence to deal with diversity would increase, their attitudes towards learner differences would be positive, and they would be keen to work towards minimizing barriers to learning and participation in their classrooms.

Several studies have concluded that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education determine their commitment to inclusive practices and influence the outcomes of their

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<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms have been used throughout this thesis to protect the identities of all participants (teachers, schools, officials, and districts).

practice (UNESCO, 1999b; Tait and Purdie, 2000; Rose, 2001; Baguwemu & Nabirye, 2002; Burstein et al, 2004). Thus, it is important that a great deal of emphasis is placed on teachers' professional development as their understanding of, and commitment to, the task at hand depends on it. To this effect, this study is also premised on the belief that teachers' attitudes to this innovation will be greatly influenced by the kind of training they are exposed to. If teachers are well trained (know what is expected of them) and feel supported, they will be confident to adopt and develop an inclusive system of education. As a result, I started the study from the perspective that teachers' professional development is the most important strategy for dealing with inclusive education, or any other systemic educational reform.

Considering the complexity of the proposed change, I also questioned the content and quality of staff development programmes that were being made available to schools, and whether they were giving teachers the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to effectively understand and implement inclusion. Based on this premise, the study seeks to investigate the extent and content of the staff development efforts (e.g. workshops) that teachers were exposed to in preparation for implementation. It specifically investigates the extent to which their training develops their understanding of the rationale for the new policy, and the extent to which it gives them skills and confidence to develop inclusive classrooms and schools.

As inclusion is still in its infancy in South Africa, there are many areas that still need to be researched, areas that are critical to our understanding of what constitutes effective

practice in inclusion. The literature reviewed in this thesis suggests that some of these unexplored areas include, first, the role of information dissemination in the understanding of policy, and, second, the influence of dissemination of information on adoption and implementation. This thesis analyses these and attempts to investigate the ways in which they contribute to the preparation of teachers and schools for the implementation of inclusive education.

#### **1.4.1 The theoretical frameworks for the study**

A number of theoretical frameworks have proved useful in this study. The overarching framework is social constructivism (Donald et al, 2002; Atherton, 2005), which consists of two conceptual and two theoretical frameworks, namely: the philosophy of inclusion (Jenkinson, 1997; Engelbrecht, 1999; UNESCO, 1999a; Mittler, 2000), re-culturing (Clarke, 2000; Doyle, 2002), the theory of innovation diffusion (Rogers, 2003) and the systems theory (Sarason, 1990; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997, 2002). The theory of social constructivism was selected to frame the study as it emphasises the role of social encounters in the development of meanings and understandings (Atherton, 2005). In the context of schools, teachers are not passive recipients of innovations, but are constructors of their own knowledge, meanings, and understanding of innovations through social interactions. The philosophy of inclusion views education as a human right, while re-culturing focuses on building the capacity of schools to reflect critically on their practice, by asking “why” questions instead on focussing on “how”, thereby changing the culture of schools to one of collaborative learning. In addition, the systems theory emphasises the interrelatedness of different systems and subsystems.

The three theoretical frameworks I have chosen to focus on are fused to provide a lens through which to examine how the different subsystems of the education system work or do not work together, how social encounters are used or not used to support teachers' learning, and how the new policy is being diffused. Using these theories, the thesis then argues that unless the innovation (in this case, the policy of inclusive education and training) is well diffused throughout the system, those expected to act as agents of change will not have a good understanding of what it is about, and this will negatively affect their adoption and implementation thereof. Moreover, it will fail to challenge the prevailing exclusionary cultures of schools. These concepts and theories are discussed more fully in **Chapter Four** of this study.

#### **1.4.2 The research methodology**

A qualitative case study approach was chosen as the best method for investigating ways in which teachers understand and experience the diffusion of policy information. Multiple research instruments, for example, questionnaires, interviews and focus group interviews, among others, were used to gather information about individual and collective experiences around the issue of inclusion policy. These were analysed in view of the districts', and to some extent, the province's attempts to disseminate information about EWP6. Three critical research questions informed the study:

1. What are the teachers' understandings of the new policy of inclusion?
2. What strategies are used to manage the diffusion of this innovation at district and school levels?

3. What support is available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to shift from the old system of education to the new one?

Initially, an exploratory study was conducted to field-test the questionnaire and interview schedules, and to understand the progress made towards implementation of the policy. Analysis of data from the pilot study suggested that very little had been done to prepare for implementation and that many teachers were, in fact, likely to be ignorant, if not unsupportive of the policy of inclusive education (this is addressed in more detail in **Chapter Five**). It was this finding that led me to a change of focus from investigating teachers' experiences of the implementation process, to examining their experiences of the process of diffusion of the innovation within the system.

Therefore, during the second stage of data collection, the purposive sampling method (Robson, 2002) was used to select schools for participation in the study, hence three schools in two districts. School principals were approached and only those schools that were willing to take part were included. Since there was a provincial pilot running in the Greyville district, as well as in two other districts during this period, I was careful not to include any of the pilot schools in the sample as I felt that non-pilot schools would give an unbiased indication of how teachers, generally, were experiencing the diffusion of this policy. The study used self-completion questionnaires, audits, individual interviews, focus- group interviews and observations. Individual and focus-group interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, and individual participants and group representatives were given opportunities to comment on the transcriptions. Their comments were taken

into account in the final analysis of data. The use of different methods of data collection helped to triangulate my findings. **Chapter Five** describes and explains the choice of research design and methodology employed in this study in more detail.

### **1.4.3 The significance of the thesis**

The significance of this study lies in its use of different theoretical frameworks to understand the relationship between the policy of inclusive education and training, and teachers' understanding or misunderstanding of how the innovation will function. There is a dearth of research on inclusive education in South Africa, especially research that examines how teachers are experiencing the diffusion of EWP6, and how they are being developed and supported to prepare for its implementation. This study is, therefore, groundbreaking in that the process of disseminating information about inclusive education, and the impact it is likely to have on adoption and implementation, has not yet been documented. The study contributes to research that examines this aspect of the policy implementation process in relation to inclusive education, with possible significance both locally and internationally.

### **1.4.4 Limitations of the study**

It is important to state that as the sole collector and analyst of data, I am aware that I may have had assumptions and biases that could have influenced the collection and analysis of data in this study (Creswell, 1994). I have worked in a mainstream high school as a guidance teacher, as well as in a special school for learners with intellectual

disabilities. In my current work context I am responsible for teaching five modules, namely, Diversity, Disability, and Inclusive Education; Introduction to Disability Studies; Psychology of Teaching and Learning; Inclusive Education; and Addressing Barriers to Learning and Development. As such, my knowledge (and beliefs) about the 'special' and 'mainstream' education contexts has, on one hand, been very useful in working with teachers. On the other hand, as a result of the sensitivities I have developed through my work experiences, I acknowledge the possibility of biases and preconceptions. To avoid the slightest possibility of a bias in the interpretation of data, I have obviated the problem by using a variety of research methods and data collection tools to address this.

One of the chief limitations of a study such as this is that, generally, case studies do not lead to statistical generalisations (Robson, 2002). Cohen and Manion (1989: 150), however, argue that case studies can be used to generalise "from an instance to a class" and thus my findings can be said to have significance, although limited to the district from which the data was collected. The findings of the study draw attention to several factors and raises questions for possible comparative studies of innovation (policy) diffusion (this is addressed more fully in **Chapter Seven** of this thesis). Although this case study focused on what was going on in the three schools, the opportunities to observe teacher-training-workshops and to speak to district officials provided me with a much wider perspective of what is occurring in general within districts, in terms of teacher preparation for inclusive education. Data obtained can subsequently be used to give theoretical insights, which can be reasonably



generalisable to other similar school contexts (Robson, 2002, citing Sim, 1998) within the districts studied.

Finally, because the focus of the study is on how teachers are experiencing policy dissemination, apart from observations made in general discussion of policy, I did not deem it necessary to undertake any specific critical or conceptual analysis of the policy itself.

#### **1.4.5 Ethical considerations**

A variety of ethical considerations were pertinent during data collection and analysis. First, in terms of gaining access to schools, permission was obtained from the responsible directorate in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (also referred to as the provincial Department of Education) (**Appendix A**). Access into schools was negotiated with principals (as gatekeepers) and teachers as (potential participants). Second, informed consent (Fontana & Frey, 1998) was obtained from both teachers and principals, based on their understanding of the purpose of the study, and their willingness to participate in it. Third, at the beginning of the study, the participants were assured of the following: their anonymity and the confidentiality of our interactions; the anonymity of their schools throughout the research process, as well as in the thesis and the publications that are likely to follow, hence the use of pseudonyms. Nevertheless, it is difficult to protect the provincial Chief Education Specialist's (hereafter referred to as CES) identity under the confidentiality clause, but she was made aware of this when she took part in the study. All interviews were audio-taped with the participants'

permission. The only ones that were not audio-taped were the provincial CES' (her preference) and the casual conversations held with different participants at various times. All participants were assured that the contents of our conversations, whether taped or not, would be used solely for the study. Fourth, ethical clearance to conduct this study was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (See certificate number HSS/05/040, **Appendix B**).

In addition, all participating schools were promised assistance with staff development in inclusive education at the conclusion of this project, if they needed it.

## **1.5 The structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. **Chapter One** has introduced and provided a brief overview of the study, highlighting the rationale for the study, theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, and the research process. **Chapter Two** maps the paradigm shift (change in thinking and beliefs) that has led to the rejection of a segregated special education model, and to the adoption of an inclusive system of education and training. **Chapter Three** discusses the challenges that face the Ministry of Education in managing the change process from special education thinking to inclusive education thinking, while **Chapter Four** tables the conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, namely: the philosophy of inclusion; re-culturing; the theory of innovation diffusion, and the systems theory. The fusion of these theoretical approaches is used as a multi-focal method to understand teachers' experiences of this policy within the system.

**Chapter Five** describes the research design and methodology used in this study. The research is based on a qualitative multi-site case study of three primary schools. Data collection methods used included journal keeping, participant observations, document analysis, an audit, interviews, focus-group interviews, and self-completion questionnaires. **Chapters Six** presents and discusses the research findings, while **Chapter Seven** discusses the findings presented and analysed in **Chapter Six**, and theorises the poor diffusion of EWP6 in the participating schools. This chapter concludes the thesis and identifies emerging implications for policy and practice related to the diffusion and implementation of EWP6 and inclusive education. In addition, implications for further research are identified.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **A paradigm shift: From special education to inclusive education**

*Africans want a just share in the whole of South Africa; they want security and a stake in society... During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people... I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities (Nelson Mandela's Rivonia Trial speech, cited in Mandela, 1994: 437-438).*

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In order to understand the rationale for the new policy of inclusive education and training in South Africa, a brief background and history of the education of learners with diverse educational needs is necessary. This chapter provides this background, and charts the various discourses that have, over the years, influenced how learners with disabilities have been perceived and their educational needs addressed. Furthermore, the chapter reviews the policy framework within which the education of learners with diverse educational needs has and continues to occur in present-day South Africa.

First, the apartheid education system was characterised by a proliferation of education departments organised according to race and ethnicity, and work was duplicated for each group. There was so much duplication, in fact, that it is difficult to determine how many departments there were. Different researchers give different figures, for example, some claim that there were as many as 19 (e.g. Hartshorne, 1999; Manganyi, 2001), 18

(e.g. Chisholm, 2004; Sayed, 2004), others say 17 (e.g. Forlin & Engelbrecht, 1998), while others identify 15 (e.g. Karlsson, McPherson & Pampallis, 2001). According to the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995), there was a Department of National Education, which was in charge of policy and budget allocations on behalf of central government. Then there was a department each for Indian, coloured and white affairs, (white education was further organised in four semi-autonomous provincial departments). The African population had six self-governing territorial departments, four semi-independent state departments, and a central department in charge of education for Africans who stayed in "White" South Africa. According to the Department of Education (2005), there were 17 Departments of Education that were amalgamated. In accordance with the policies and practices of the day, there was no interaction between these systems of education, except maybe at top management level (Department of Education, 1995). This duplication was also characterised by inequalities. To cite Sparks, the racially organised departments of education were:

...hopelessly unequal. White public education was equal to the best in the developed world, while black education was poorer than many in the Third World: buildings were derelict, 30 percent had no electricity, 25 percent no water, 50 percent no sanitation and one-third of the teachers were unqualified and many more were under-qualified. Education for the Coloured and Indian minorities, also segregated from both the whites and the blacks as well as from each other, fell somewhere in between. And while education for whites was free and compulsory, for blacks, Coloureds and Indians it was neither (Sparks, 2003: 220-221).

Second, schools were segregated according to notions of "normality" and "abnormality", which meant that there was a mainstream system for "ordinary" learners and a separate, special education system for children who were seen as falling outside the "norm". Although special education thrived on the failure of regular education to teach

all learners, there was little – if any – interaction between them. Special education was also provided according to race, with massive disparities between services for different racial groups. In addition to the mainstream and special education divide, there were huge differences in educational facilities for rural and urban communities. In most cases, the conditions of schools in rural communities were appalling, and facilities for children with disabilities were, and continue to be, almost non-existent. Furthermore, the system of education has until now continued to marginalise many other children on the basis of cultural, social and/or linguistic differences. For example, those growing up in disadvantaged conditions, such as street children, working children, poor children and – more recently – children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS, have been poorly provided for, if at all.

So great have been the inequalities that it came as no surprise that the new democratically elected government of 1994 inherited a system of education that was “not working” (Kruss, 1998: 99). Because of these inequalities, the transformation of all aspects of life in line with democratic principles became a top priority for the new government. The playing field was too uneven and the task of levelling it had to begin immediately. The most serious challenge that the new government faced was developing a system of education that would provide quality education for all South African learners. It was, and still remains, a matter of urgency for the new government to correct the imbalances of the past. The reason for this is the belief that education, the same primary tool that had been used for creating inequalities among communities,

can also be used to improve the lives of all South Africans, not only those who were previously disadvantaged.

This has led to a major shift in policies and legislation developed across the board from 1994 onwards. Among these shifts has been the adoption of a policy of inclusive education and training in 2001, namely EWP6. As indicated in the previous chapter, adopting an inclusive system of education and training was very much in line with international thinking and developments (UNESCO, 1994; 1998; 1999a). This policy seeks to integrate special and regular education into a unitary system of education that is responsive to the different learning needs of all learners in the South African context (Department of Education, 1997).

However, as discussed in **Chapter One**, embracing this new way of thinking about education and practising teaching is not going to be an easy shift for many, particularly for teachers who will be expected to handle the day-to-day practicalities of providing quality education for a wider range of learning needs, within inclusive learning environments. One of the reasons for this difficulty is the influence of discourses – discourses that have shaped our perceptions, beliefs, thinking, and values about education, as well as about learners with diverse educational needs. Discourses inform the ways in which education is commonly talked about, particularly the education of learners who experience difficulties in schools (Fulcher, 1989). In the next section, I discuss four such discourses.

## 2.2 Discourses influencing educational provision

Fulcher (1989) argues that discourses not only inform practices, but they also compete for dominance in legislative decisions, educational and other social practice. The author identifies four main discourses of disability, namely: the charity, lay, medical, and rights discourses. First, in relation to the charity discourse, she asserts that in most countries missionaries who felt pity for excluded learners started special education. This discourse portrays people with disabilities as minors who are dependent on human benevolence to survive. Second, subsequently supported by such authors as Peters (1993) and Bailey (1998), she describes the medical discourse as being characterised by the use of language that isolates the service consumer (vocabulary such as *client*, *patient*, *cure*, *rehabilitation*, etc); this language implies the powerlessness and passivity of the service consumers while the professionals make decisions about them. Thus, in this discourse, disability is portrayed as physical incapacity. There is also over-scrutiny of the individual, while the context is ignored, and there tends to be a collectivisation of individual differences.

On this issue, she concludes that, because it has dominated for a long time, the medical discourse enjoys a lot of authority. As such, it has influenced the lay and charity discourses and consequently educational provision (ibid) in many countries. As a result of its pre-occupation with the individual, it has been dubbed the *Individual Pupil View* (UNESCO, 1993), the *Traditional View* (Hegarty, 1994), or the *Individual Perspective* (Ainscow, 1999). This perspective makes a number of assumptions: first, that there is an identifiable group of children who are 'special' because of their



characteristics (disabled, disadvantaged, possess intellectual challenges, to name only a few). Second, that this group, because of these challenges, needs to be identified and taught differently. Third, that those who experience similar difficulties must be taught together. Last, that other children are 'okay' and will, therefore, succeed in their learning (UNESCO, 1993:34-35). The medical discourse's preoccupation with what is wrong with individual learners has completely blinded education authorities and practitioners not only to individuals' strengths that could be capitalised on in the learning process, but also to features of the school system that continue to prevent learners from learning effectively.

In South Africa, this influence has been particularly evident in the exclusionary practices towards those learners who are seen as having special needs (Department of Education, 1997). In addition, the medical discourse, as has been established, is responsible for the current emphasis on learner deficits, rather than on their abilities and educational needs (Fulcher, 1989). By virtue of its nature, this discourse is:

...highly focused on pathology, not normalcy, on sickness, not wellbeing, on the nature and aetiology of the presenting problem itself, not on the individual who has the problem, on dealing with the specific pathology in a centred way, not on the social or ecosystem which surrounds the problem... (Bailey, 1998: 49)

An overview of the South African special education system makes it obvious that it has been influenced by the medical model that "links impairment and disability" (Fulcher, 1989: 27). Even the divisions in service provision between regular and special education have been structured in accordance with this discourse's preoccupation with impairment and connotations of individual deficit. Consequently, special educational provision has been focused on identified categories of disability. This has meant that

the majority of learners with special needs, but who had no impairments, could not be accommodated by any of the categories of disability (Department of Education, 1997). Due to this technicality, many learners' special educational needs have remained unrecognised and have not been addressed (ibid).

A third discourse of disability that Fulcher (1989) identifies is the lay discourse, which is characterised by prejudice, fear, pity, and ignorance, which results in many discriminatory social practices. She asserts that the lay discourse has, in some way, been influenced by the medical discourse as its proponents also tend to emphasise learner deficits resulting from impairments and disabilities, rather than focusing on their abilities and educational needs, and the role of schools in addressing them.

Last, there is a fairly new rights discourse, which Fulcher asserts is emerging in opposition to the medical, lay, and charity discourses. It seeks to fight discrimination and exclusion and to promote equality, self-reliance and the independence of those who are seen as disabled (ibid). This discourse scrutinises the social contexts in which learning takes place. Referred to as the *Curriculum View* (UNESCO, 1993), the *Alternative View* (Hegarty, 1994) or the *Interactive Perspective* (Ainscow, 1999), this discourse is an emerging paradigm that celebrates learner differences and focuses on how educational tasks and activities can be adjusted to minimise learning difficulties. It is based on the assumptions that: experiencing learning difficulties is a normal part of schooling that can happen to any learner at any stage of their schooling; it is the interaction of learners' characteristics with the teaching style, classroom organisation,

tasks and activities, which may cause learning difficulties (therefore, the decisions that teachers make can either create or minimise difficulties in learning); the improvements introduced to avoid or minimise learning difficulties benefit all learners; teachers need to be supported as they improve their practice (UNESCO, 1993: 40-41). Hegarty (1994: 126) adds that insensitive handling and over competitive school cultures can fail to address the individual learning needs of some learners, making them “candidates for segregated schooling”.

In most democratic countries, education is regarded as a human right, and – as such – post 1994 South Africa rightfully subscribes to the rights discourse. For example, all policies and legislation that have emerged since 1994 are concerned with issues of access, equity, equality, redress, and social justice. EWP6 is intended to integrate special and regular education, to reinforce a learner-centred approach to educational provision, and to realign support services so that they are relevant and readily accessible to those who require them the most (Department of Education, 2001a).

The challenge now remains for the whole system of education to make the necessary shift in thinking and in service provision, so that schools can become effective in their role. In effective schools, according to Gold and Evans (1998), all stakeholders are learners. They argue that such schools are organised in a manner that enhances everybody’s learning, and that learning takes place when learners (young and old) are willing to take risks and make mistakes, and when they feel safe and powerful (ibid). This means that by adopting an interactive perspective to learning difficulties, the

schools need to create a learning environment where all learners can access support. This perspective also places schools in a better position to identify and address sites of oppression, while supporting all learners in their learning.

This thesis is premised on the notion that unless the new rights discourse or the curriculum view is echoed in classroom practice, the plight of marginalised learners will remain the same. It is, therefore, critical that teachers and support personnel, as agents of change, are provided with professional development and training in the innovation (inclusive education policy), and guided to the point where they clearly understand the paradigm shift that is taking place and why this shift is necessary. Only then will we have schools that cater for all learners, and only then will we see teachers and classrooms that adequately respond to, and support, all learning needs.

### **2.3 The route to inclusive education**

As mentioned previously, the newly elected government and the Ministry of Education in South Africa in 1994 were faced with many challenges. To illustrate, apart from the development of a quality system of education, another major problem was the unavailability of special education services in black African communities. In schools serving those communities, large classes and negligible resources were a norm (Dean, 1995), with even worse conditions occurring in rural areas. To demonstrate how big the gap was at the inception of the new democracy, Dean writes that:

... a million rural black children receive no schooling because there are neither the teachers nor the classrooms to cater for them. (1995: 80)

With such baggage, it is not surprising that so much attention is paid to breaking the back of illiteracy, poverty reduction, promotion of life-long learning, and – specifically – to addressing unequal education provision in the country.

Writing from a white South African perspective, McGurk captures the magnitude of these inequalities:

The reality out there is very threatening, in some ways so threatening to be almost incomprehensible. To use a metaphor: We have been living in a mansion without really realizing it, and as reality has become more threatening we have tended to close the blinds. We peek out now and again to watch the street children down there, and it is disturbing. We know that we must open our doors to let some of them in. We do that. But suddenly, if too many come in, we have to start changing the rules of the house, and probably one day hand over the keys. That is terribly threatening, but it is, I think, the reality of our situation (1990:15)

While this is a great metaphor, in terms of social justice, it is not quite adequate because it only focuses on the issues of distribution, and ignores the processes used to acquire the holdings (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996). In this case, the fact is that the street children were used to build this mansion and that they also have a claim to the land on which it stands.

While it is important to acknowledge that the inequalities of the apartheid era will take years to rectify, it is also important to recognise that emerging policies and legislation of the post-1994 era have attempted to create conditions that will lead to redress. The necessary paradigm shift is, therefore, evident at the higher level, where policies are generated. As highlighted in the previous section, a common feature of all education policies in truly democratic countries is that they entrench human rights and social

justice, quality education for all learners, equality of opportunity, equity and redress, curriculum entitlement, right of choice and a right to basic education. However, paradigm shifts like this cannot be mandated. As Fullan (1999:18) argues, “you can’t mandate what matters.” What still remains to be seen is how the Department of Education will persuade teachers to change their thinking, beliefs, and values about the education of those learners said to have special needs. It is only when these changes happen, and these progressive policies are put into practice, that there is hope for quality education for all.

Several policy reforms have already occurred in preparation for an inclusive education system, and some of them are discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.1 Policy reforms**

The first policy reform was introduced in 1995, when the Ministry of Education released its White Paper on Education and Training, a document that clearly departed from apartheid policies and emphasised redress, equality of access, and non-discrimination (Department of Education, 1995). In this document, the department acknowledges that past inequalities have serious implications for curricula, teaching materials, pedagogy, and teacher education, as well as the culture of professional supervision and management.

A year later, the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) was adopted by the new democracy. In the education section of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution clearly states

that all learners, young and old, have a right to basic education. It also makes it illegal for the state, organisations, groups or individuals to discriminate against anyone, on any grounds (RSA, 1996, Article 9, 3). In addition, the South African Schools Act (hereafter referred to as SASA), passed in the same year as the Constitution, introduced compulsory education for all learners between ages 7 and 15, or from grade 1 to grade 9 (Department of Education, 1996). It was the first time education was made compulsory for African children. SASA also opened all schools to all children, including learners with special needs in education, provided that their educational needs could be reasonably met (ibid).

SASA attempted to promote interaction and to reduce the distance between regular and special education, but to date there has been very little collaboration or interaction between them. Furthermore, as highlighted in the report by NCSNET and NCESS, this Act, in its conceptualisation of “special education needs”, shows no significant shift from the historical deficit understanding (Department of Education, 1997). In essence, SASA could have been effectively used to pave the way for an inclusive system of education and training, but it has in fact had very little impact on how the education system operates. The following two examples highlight this Act’s failure to bring about change in practice. First, although the Act makes it possible for learners with “identified” special needs to attend their neighbourhood schools in the event that their parents choose not to enrol them in a special school, SASA makes provision for schools to turn these learners away, if – in their assessment – it is deemed impractical to meet such learners’ educational needs.

Throughout the country, many children who have special educational needs continue to be excluded from their neighbourhood schools on the pretext that these schools are not equipped, and the teachers unprepared to address their educational needs. As a result, these children are forced to seek admission in special schools, which are often socially isolated in the sense that they are located far from learners' neighbourhoods. Therefore, learners often have no friends from their neighbourhoods attending the same schools, and end up being strangers in their own communities. The second example is the fact that education was made compulsory for nine years but not free, and this continues to marginalise those who come from poor homes as they do not enjoy the same access to education as those from homes that can afford school fees and the necessary supplies such as uniforms and books (Maile, 2004). The former group continues to be marginalised in most schools, with some being prevented from attending classes or having their report cards withheld, if their school fees are not up-to-date, even though such practices are a violation of the learners' right to education (ibid) and, therefore, illegal.

In May 2005, in an attempt to salvage the situation, the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, announced her department's move to provide free schooling for the poor starting in January 2006. This is an attempt to end the marginalisation of those learners whose parents are unable to pay school fees (<http://www.southafrica.info> accessed 23/05/2006). If this takes off, it will be a real lifeline for learners from poor families. This issue of free schooling is taken up again in section 2.3.1.1.



As a democracy, it is important that we are cautious of adopting practices that perpetuate exclusions and inequalities among citizens. UNESCO (1998) cautions that one of the great dangers facing the world today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of their communities. When critical masses of individuals or groups become marginalised, society itself becomes polarised (ibid: 2).

As I indicated earlier, the biggest disadvantage of having a separate special education system is that learning difficulties are attributed to deficits within the learner, rather than within the education system and schools. Furthermore, special education tends to rely heavily on specialists (e.g. educational psychologists and psychiatrists). This leads to ordinary teachers feeling inadequate to deal with learners' special needs. In addition, those who are identified as in need of special education services are often labelled 'deficient' and as needing special education services. Furthermore, a special education system is very expensive to maintain, and currently very few learners are served by it, leaving a large number of learners without any educational services. It was with these issues in mind that in 1996, the NCSNET and NCESS were commissioned to investigate educational provision for learners experiencing special needs in education, and to give advice to the Ministry of Education on the restructuring of special needs education in line with the government's commitment to realise equity and redress in all aspects of education. This investigation produced a report informed by major international initiatives supporting inclusive education like the UNESCO Salamanca

Statement of 1994 and the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of 1993 which urge countries to recognise:

...the principle of equal educational opportunities for children, youth and adults in integrated settings. (<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/studnts.htm>, accessed 15/01/03).

Although the move to adopt inclusive education was influenced by international developments in education, Lomofsky & Lazarus (2001) maintain that the commission and committee were intent to find solutions that were relevant and meaningful to all South African people. As a result, they argue that the report (Department of Education, 1997) seeks to move the focus away from the identification of children who experience learning difficulties. The commissions saw this as being unhelpful towards understanding the causes of learning difficulties or exclusion. Rather, the report advocates the notion of identifying barriers to learning and development with the aim of identifying where (and how) the system needs to change. Barriers are defined as those factors that lead to the failure of the system to handle diversity, thus causing learning breakdown or making it difficult for learners to access educational provision (Department of Education, 1997). This is not to deny that some barriers to learning are located within learners, but rather to suggest that education policy needs to be based on an analysis of all factors that render the education system inaccessible to a significant majority of learners – factors that lead to high levels of learning breakdown (ibid). In accordance with these beliefs, the systemic approach adopted by the NCSNET/NCESS suggests that barriers to learning, development, and participation could be located within learners, within schooling systems, or within broader economic, social, and political contexts (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

To this effect, the NCSNET/NCESS identified 10 key barriers to learning and participation that are prevalent in the South African education system. These include socio-economic factors, negative attitudes, inflexible curriculum, language and communication, inappropriate and inadequate resources and support, lack of parental involvement, inappropriate and inadequate support, disabilities, lack of human resource development, and lack of protective legislation and policy (Department of Education, 1997: 12-34).

### **2.3.1.1 Barriers to learning and development**

The first barrier to learning and development is poverty and underdevelopment. The NCSNET/NCESS report cites a study conducted by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which found that nearly four million children under 18 years of age live in indigent conditions in rural areas (Department of Education, 1997). This confirmed an earlier study conducted in Swaziland that reported that, in developing contexts – particularly in rural areas – poverty is a common reason for dropping out of school (Swaziland Ministry of Education, 1986). Poverty, coupled with resource shortages in their schools and the poor education of their parents or carers, places many children at a developmental disadvantage (ibid).

In South Africa, despite the fact that education is now compulsory for the first 9 years, or up to age 15, it is still not free. Families that are struggling financially are not likely to meet the demands of schooling (e.g. fees, uniforms, books and other school supplies)

and this may lead to children from such homes being excluded from activities or dropping out of school (Department of Education, 1997; Maile, 2004). It is no wonder then that underdeveloped communities tend to have fewer schools and that sometimes the condition of existing schools may not be suitable for teaching and learning purposes. Often, such schools struggle to attract or even retain qualified teachers. Thus, if the cycle of unemployment and poverty is to be broken, poor communities in general and rural communities in particular, need to be provided with better resources so as to increase access to quality education for all.

The proposed move to declare some schools “free” might address this if it is handled well. However, Mcetywa (2006) reports that there is serious miscommunication regarding the implementation and administration of this programme between national and provincial offices and, as a result, several schools in KwaZulu-Natal are badly affected. In May 2005 the Ministry had announced its plan to declare schools serving the poor community as ‘free schools’ with effect from January 2006 but, Mcetywa, in her investigation of this matter, was informed that the National office had wanted this programme of ‘no fee schools’ to kick in in 2007. However, in the 2006/7 provincial budget, there was no allocation for these schools. In the interim, these schools have not collected fees and this has caused serious financial problems, as the department has not yet given them the promised subsidies (ibid). Although it is still early days, signs are that there are administrative problems that are likely to render this much-needed programme ineffective.

In addition to poverty, there are several factors that place many children at risk in South Africa. For example, sexual abuse is becoming common in some children's lives, and girl children have become more at risk of being raped as the myth that having sex with a virgin is a cure for HIV/AIDS spreads (Ndiyane, 2001). In addition, a report released in December 2001 showed that 12% of South African mothers were between 12 and 16 years old (South African Press Association, 2001), and were, therefore, of school-going age. Additionally, the spread of HIV/AIDS has also placed many learners at risk. Some are infected and, as is widely reported, many others are affected as their family members become chronically ill and die. Both affected and infected learners are not adequately provided for in our system of education (de Lange, Greyling, & Leslie, 2005).

Another study conducted in a rural district made me aware of how social practices can also place some learners at risk (Ntombela, 2003). In the midlands region of KwaZulu-Natal there is a local custom called *ukuphuma*, a festival of song and dance where young maidens are "on display" to young men in their community. Parents reportedly encourage their daughters as young as 15 years old to take part, hoping to get some bride price from interested suitors. Those who are 'lucky' enough to get marriage offers do not return to school as they are considered to be women. Obviously, this practice has the potential to place these girls "at risk of [being raped and of] contracting the HI virus through unprotected transactional sex, often with older men" (ibid: 40).

A related practice that places young girls at risk is that of virginity testing. This custom has been revived in an attempt to encourage young people (especially girls) to abstain from sex until they are married. Unfortunately, it advertises those who are still virgins, making them easy targets for both those who still believe that sex with a virgin is a cure for AIDS, and those who simply want to sleep with uninfected girls (Isa, 2000). The author also believes that during virginity testing sessions, the girls' privates are handled in an unhygienic manner, which can also spread diseases (ibid). Another twist to this issue is the assertion made by Hlongwa (2004) citing Leclerc-Madlala (2000) that some girls have resorted to anal sex in an attempt to keep their virginity, a practice that, unfortunately, still exposes them to HIV infection.

In rural areas where poverty is rife and development is slowest, many school sites and buildings are not properly maintained and many lack basic facilities such as properly constructed buildings, toilets, and running water, rendering them unsafe and unhealthy for all learners (as well as teachers) (Department of Education, 1997). In addition, underdevelopment in the form of lack of infrastructure and the shortage of essential services such as schools, transport and health care centres also poses a serious problem for the development of children in rural area, and renders many schools physically inaccessible to many learners. As a result, children from affected communities often don't benefit from the education system. For example, children needing medical attention (which is not available in their community) may become sickly and miss school. Others may find walking long distances to reach a remote school prohibitive, and drop out.

Conditions are even worse for children (and adults) with disabilities (Department of Education, 1997). For example, Pather (2003) asserts that only 64 200 out of 320 000 children with disabilities have access to education. If this is anything to go by, there is still a serious shortage of learning spaces that the government needs to build. However, this backlog is not easy to address as, in addition to education, there are many other demands on the country's limited resources to meet basic human needs in health, housing, and welfare (Pillay, 1992; Wolpe, 1992), all of which have an impact on the quality of learning. For example, in the 2006/7 budget, education received an 11, 7% increase from the 2005/6 allocations, compared to 13, 1% for health and 29, 1% for housing (Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006). In this budget, the following allocations for health, housing, welfare and education departments were proposed:

Department	2006/7	2007/8
Education	16 209 078 billion	17 983 127 billion
Health	11 736 761 billion	12 795 794 billion
Housing	1 252 133 billion	1 520 850 billion
Social Welfare	894 810m	939 283m

**Table 1: Adapted from the 2006/7 KwaZulu-Natal budget speech, p 20.**

The second barrier, negative attitudes towards children with disabilities and those who are 'different', tends to interfere with learning for many learners in schools. To illustrate, regular education teachers, as well as society at large, tend to respond negatively to children and adults who have disabilities. Generally, there is misinformation about

causes of disabilities. In some communities the birth of a child with a disability is seen as a curse. Unfortunately, such attitudes result in labelling, which leads to exclusion (Department of Education, 1997). In schools, teachers also lack awareness; their training does not prepare them for working with all children. For example, in mainstream schools an incorrect response to a question can be ridiculed so much (by both teacher and other learners) that it can become a nickname for the unfortunate respondent. In contexts where such practice is common, no one realises that it creates tension and that it does not contribute to the creation of a welcoming learning environment.

Generally, South Africans tend to view differences negatively. Our history has taught us to be prejudiced against those who are, for one reason or another, different from us. As such, it is not only children with disabilities who are negatively viewed and labelled in the school system. All those who are seen as different (slower than others, poor, different ethnicity, etc.) tend to receive the same treatment, maybe in a lesser measure. To illustrate, in my school-based teaching days, it was not uncommon to hear teachers calling learners by derogatory names that referred to their characteristics, for example, "*sdudla*" (the fat one) or "*nkomo*" (lacking football or basketball skills). Staffroom talk could also be characterised by negative attitudes that were reinforced by laughter or by the absence of a challenge from colleagues. Many a learner is often labelled as incapable, mediocre, or forward – labels that have an influence on how the rest of the staff perceive those learners. Such practice is likely to have a negative impact on learners' performance in academic tasks, as perceptions influence teachers'



expectations and these tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies (Moletsane, 1998a; Mittler, 1999).

Third, inflexible curricula within schools have continued to exclude a number of learners from learning. For example, in the apartheid education system, education and the curricula were rigidly structured with no provision for meeting the diverse needs of learners. As Spady and Schlebusch (1999) report, this system was based on the assumption that there is a given (and static) body of knowledge that teachers transmit and learners must acquire. This knowledge is kept in separate containers known as subjects (ibid). A major problem with this system was that all learners had to learn the same content, in the same manner and pace (Department of Education, 1997), with no exceptions save for learners in special schools or classes. Spady and Schlebusch add that many learners were made to repeat grades, if they failed to display that they had acquired the necessary knowledge to progress (1999). As a result, in many classrooms across the country, there are still many learners who are approximately three years older than the expected age for the class. To complicate matters, teachers lack the knowledge and skills to work with multi-age classes, and it is common practice for over-aged learners to be taught the same curriculum and content in the same manner and pace as their younger classmates (Ntombela, 2003).

Another challenge of this system was that teachers felt pressurised to finish the syllabus in a set time for fear that inspectors might view them as lazy or incompetent. This was a problem because learning is an individual matter. To expect all learners to

master the same content at the same time is not realistic. A classical example of this inflexibility is highlighted in Ntombela (2003: 41) who cites a case of a rural school where a 17-year-old learner in grade 7 often bunked school for fear of being seen going to a primary school. Although this learner did very well in tests, he could not be promoted to the next grade, even though his teacher admitted that:

*It is clear that we are wasting his time but the high school will not take him without proof that he has passed grade 7.*

Unfortunately, these practices continue in spite of the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (hereafter referred to as C2005) and Outcomes Based Education (hereafter referred to as OBE) in 1998 and the Revised National Curriculum (RNCS) and later the National Curriculum Statement (hereafter referred to as NCS) in 2002. This curriculum framework demands complex changes in how schools are organised. It promotes continuous learning that is not test and/or examination driven, but which uses assessment standards to develop learning outcomes. It is founded on the philosophy that all learners can succeed in their learning. The main principle, that “*anyone can learn anything from anywhere at anytime in any way from worldwide experts*” is in stark contrast with the principle of the old order, that “*specific students can learn specific subjects in specific classrooms on a specific schedule in specific ways from a specific teacher*” (Spady & Schlebusch, 1999: 22). In many schools, unfortunately, change has been very slow, and the new principle is yet to be realised.

Fourth, while there are 11 official languages in South Africa, not all of them have the same status, particularly in education. The South African language policy allows for the

use of vernacular as the language of learning and teaching in the first three years of schooling and then English or Afrikaans from the fourth year up. This works in rural and township primary schools where communities are mostly African, but not in other areas. In schools that were previously for Asian, coloured and white learners, this does not work at all, since the communities served by these schools are mostly English speaking, which means that learners whose first language is not English are forced to learn in English from the outset. Even in cases where the non-English speaking learners have become the majority in the post-1994 era, the language of learning and teaching remains English or Afrikaans. In these communities, from grade one right up to grade 12, English and/or Afrikaans dominate as media of instruction. In addition, in many schools where deaf learners are on the roll, the LoLT is not sign language, which excludes them from participating actively in the learning process.

In most schools, especially those serving mainly black African learners, the use of English or Afrikaans as LoLT creates two main problems. The first is that the majority of teachers teach and learners learn in a language that is not their first language. This places second-language learners at a disadvantage and often leads to learning breakdown (Department of Education, 1997; UNESCO 1998). As a result of second-language teaching and learning, there is an over-reliance on rote learning and the use of textbooks (Spady & Schlebusch, 1999). It is difficult for teachers with inadequate competence in the language of instruction to become creative and devise their own materials (ibid). The second problem is that, in schools where the teachers are first-language speakers of the LoLT, it is common that they lack knowledge and skills to

support learners who are second-language users (Department of Education, 1997). In such schools, second- or even third-language users often struggle to access the curriculum. As a result, their performance or participation does not compare favourably to first-language users. Consequently, there is a tendency to expect less from such learners (Department of Education, 1997; Moletsane, 1998a) and to label them as deficient.

Fifth, inappropriate and/or inadequate support for learners who experience barriers to learning has meant that many are unable to access schooling. For some, the type of schooling they have access to does not adequately meet their educational needs. To illustrate, there are very few special schools in South Africa and most of them are located in urban areas. These are the only schools where specialists are employed to address learners' educational needs, a practice that leaves the majority of the learner population unsupported. Due to the influence of the medical discourse, the available support focuses on deficits in the learner and searches for learning difficulties. Consequently, the planned intervention often causes more learning breakdown or exclusion (Department of Education, 1997) as it ignores the impact of the learning environment.

A support system that focuses exclusively on the learner is sure to miss the cause of the problem and intervention would, therefore, fail to address the problem (ibid). If learners are to benefit from their schooling experiences, it is important for schools to take into account that some children from poor communities, or from families

experiencing trauma (e.g. illness and/or death related to the HIV and AIDS pandemic), may be living in conditions that are demotivating and that reduce their opportunities to learn (UNESCO, 1998). When these learners fail, schools need to take into account their home conditions, instead of attributing their failure solely to innate intellectual aptitudes, as that approach only reinforces social conditions that are discriminatory (ibid). Sometimes the teaching methods used may not be suitable for the learners' educational needs, as in the case of over-age learners or multi-age classrooms where teachers tend to target the average learners in their teaching. Such practice, argue Schiefelbein and Schiefelbein (1999), leads to learning breakdown as some learners are likely to be functioning below average and may need some support to benefit from lessons. It is, therefore, critical that schools provide valuable support that is relevant to the needs of their learner population.

Sixth, lack of parental involvement also impacts negatively on learning. For example, if parents as primary caregivers, and – to some degree – the wider community, are not involved and recognised as a resource in the teaching and learning process, effective learning is jeopardised (Department of Education, 1997). Although SASA has entrenched the function and participation of parents in their children's education, sometimes schools do not know how to facilitate it. In most cases parents are also not empowered to take part in their children's learning, which makes parental involvement difficult. In the context of HIV/AIDS, where many adults are either ill or dead, those who are not sick or dying have to work extra hard to support the extended family. For example, South Africa is estimated to have lost between 270 000 and 520 000

people to HIV/AIDS in 2003, and it is estimated that about 21, 5% of its population is infected by this virus (Aids Foundation, 2005). Learners from such homes suffer as their significant adults are unable to provide them with adequate support and participating in school activities is, understandably, at the bottom of their priority list.

Seventh, most learners with disabilities experience barriers to learning when their learning needs are not met or when negative attitudes interfere with their learning. Also, impairments such as severe autism and schizophrenia may make it difficult for learners to engage continuously in the learning process, and – at other times – intrinsic cognitive or learning difficulties may make it difficult for some learners to manage their learning (Department of Education, 1997). There is a claim that nearly 280 000 children with disabilities are not served at all by the education system (Pather, 2003; Department of Education, 1997), which is a huge barrier to their learning, development, and participation.

Eighth, lack of skills among teachers and others who are supposed to contribute to learning and teaching in schools has a negative impact on some learners. For example, historically, the majority of teachers in South Africa have been trained in theories and practices that entrenched the dual system of special and regular education that was informed by the medical or psychological perspective (Naicker, 2000). These programmes, argues Barnes (1999), rely on traditional instructional methods that do not equip teachers to work with children of different cognitive, psychological, emotional, and physical development. Consequently, teachers in the regular education system have very limited training in working with children who experience learning difficulties. Neither

do they have training in working with those learners whose home language is not the medium of instruction. This, unfortunately, continues to place many learners at risk of being viewed as incapable of learning, and often results in exclusion.

School-based teacher development and support is also missing in most South African schools. This type of support is very important because it is relevant and specific to the schools' contexts. This will remain elusive as long as school management teams (hereafter referred to as SMTs), that is principals, their deputies, and heads of departments, are not fully developed to manage the curriculum, organise resources (time, money, and people) efficiently and support and guide staff effectively.

Ninth, due to uneven development of communities during the apartheid era, many schools have been poorly maintained and are unsafe for learners, teachers, and community members – a condition that is not conducive to learning. Some are physically inaccessible to learners using wheelchairs, the blind, and the deaf – yet another condition that excludes them from the learning process.

Tenth, lack of protective legislation and policy against discrimination, and unequal treatment of learners with diverse educational needs, presents another barrier to learning. To illustrate, as discussed in the previous section, before the NCSNET/NCESS report was written, no legislation protecting learners with diverse educational needs from an unsympathetic system existed. The education and social policies of the time were geared to preserve inequalities and not to protect such learners from

discrimination, causing barriers to learning and possibly learning breakdown (Department of Education, 1997: 12-34). While the adoption of EWP6 is, in principle, meant to facilitate the removal of such barriers, the biggest challenge is the implementation of this policy.

## **2.4 Adoption of inclusive education**

It is because of these and other barriers that marginalised groups within the country, particularly organisations for people with disabilities, intensified the call for a more responsive system of education. At the same time, the new government was fully committed to the international call for equalisation of opportunities and quality education for all as reflected in the Constitution. Consequently, from 1994, the new democratically elected government has produced, adopted and passed several white papers, policies and laws that seek to transform the country. In education, priorities have included formulating new policies that would lead to the creation of a just and equitable system – a system that would open the doors of learning and culture to all.

In July, 2001, the report of the NCSNET/NCESS was – after much consultation, debate and negotiation with various stakeholders – translated into a new policy, *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education - Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (EWP6). In this policy document, an inclusive education and training system is defined as a system that recognises that all children and youth can learn, and that they require support to do so. The policy celebrates learner diversity, recognises that learning is not limited to schools, but also takes place in different social contexts. It



seeks to create education structures/systems and methodologies that make it possible to meet the needs of all, and to increase the participation of all learners in the culture and curricula of centres of learning (e.g. schools). In addition, it challenges attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, teaching environments, and curricula to meet the needs of all learners, and to develop learners' strengths such that they are able to participate critically in the learning process (Department of Education, 2001a:16).

#### **2.4.1 Rationale for EWP6**

EWP6 seems to have a two-pronged purpose, one social and the other educational. Socially, the policy hopes to transform our divided society so that it will become more accepting of differences and foster interdependence. Educationally, its purpose is to change the system of education so that it responds favourably to all children, thereby improving the quality of their learning. Expanding on the latter, Donald et al (2002) maintain that EWP6 has two important foci; changing institutions of education and the curricula they offer so that they promote access to education for all learners, and ensuring that there is adequate and relevant support to schools, learners, staff, and parents. Such foci demand that all aspects of the education system be developed to a level where they can accommodate diversity and provide an environment where teaching and learning is supported (ibid). It is in the same vein that Rizvi and Lingard (1996) caution that calls for increased access and equity will not benefit the marginalised if the institutions remain unchanged. Instead, they suggest, each level of the system needs to be committed to social justice and that there should be support for schools and teachers to promote "equity policies and practices" (ibid: 21).

Clearly the Ministry of Education was convinced that building an inclusive school system would contribute towards developing an inclusive society. In an inclusive society everybody is assisted to realise their potential, and differences are respected and valued. Therefore, adopting a policy of inclusive education and training could be seen as a positive move in South Africa. A policy of this nature promises not only to benefit those children who were previously marginalised by the education system, but also to be instrumental in changing society as a whole, particularly discriminatory and negative attitudes to difference that were entrenched by the history of this country.

#### **2.4.2 The policy framework**

EWP6 identifies six important strategies and levers for establishing the South African inclusive education and training system. First, this type of system aims to improve special schools so that they are able to cater for a wider range of learning needs. Second, the Ministry of Education aims to incrementally make these schools part of the district support services, so that they become resources for neighbouring mainstream schools. Third, it also aims to mobilise disabled children and youth that are not already part of the education system – an estimated total of 280 000. It focuses on designating and converting approximately 500 primary schools into full-service schools (and full-service educational institutions for adult learners in further and higher education) to cater for learners with moderate support needs. Fourth, the policy is also aimed at introducing and orienting management, governing bodies, and professional staff to the inclusion model. Fifth, it seeks to establish District based Support Teams (hereafter

referred to as DBSTs) that will provide a coordinated professional support service, drawing on educational expertise across the board and from local communities. Sixth, it seeks to implement a national advocacy and information programme to support the inclusion model by focusing on the roles, responsibilities, and rights of all stakeholders within this model (Department of Education, 2001a: 20-23).

Putting these strategies into action will be a mammoth task, but since the Ministry of Education has proposed a time frame of 20 years for the full implementation of inclusive education, it is definitely achievable. Towards this end, the Ministry has formulated an implementation plan that comprises immediate, short-term, and long-term goals (Department of Education, 2001a). The short-term goals (2001-2003) include a national advocacy and education programme on inclusive education. This involves the following: implementing an outreach programme to mobilise disabled out-of-school children and youth; identifying, planning, and converting 30 special schools into resource centres; conducting an audit of special schools and implementing a programme to improve efficiency and quality; and identifying, planning, and converting 30 primary schools into full-service schools (*ibid*). Full-service schools will be ordinary schools that will receive the resources and support to cater for the full spectrum of learning needs (*ibid*). The plan also involves identifying, planning, and implementing district-based support teams; establishing procedures for early identification and addressing of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase; and introducing management, governing bodies, and professional staff – within all other public education institutions – to the inclusion model (Department of Education, 2001a: 42-43). The study presented in this thesis is focused

on these short-term goals. In particular, the study investigated how, and to what extent, the national advocacy and education programme on inclusive education was taking place. The focus was specifically on the teachers' experiences of such a programme and its impact on their understandings and views about inclusive education, as well as on their preparedness for its implementation.

The medium-term goals (2004-2008) focus on transforming further and higher education institutions. This includes enabling them to identify and respond to the diverse range of learning needs among learners, particularly those with disabilities; increasing the number of resource centres, full-service schools, and district –based support teams, in line with available resources; expanding the outreach programme to mobilise more children and youth with disabilities as per available resources (ibid). The long-term goals (2009 -2021) focus on increasing provision to meet the target of 380 resource centres, 500 full-service schools, colleges, and district-based support teams, and incorporating 280 000 out-of-school children and youth (ibid, 43). While this study did not focus on these aspects, significant lessons might emerge from studying how and to what extent the first phase has been carried out. These lessons will be identified in **Chapter Seven**.

However, this does not mean that the implementation of inclusive education is without problems. The next section reviews literature that focuses on the disadvantages of, and threats to the development of an inclusive education system in South Africa and elsewhere – in similar contexts.

## **2.5 Disadvantages of, and threats to, inclusive education**

Even though I do recognise the merit in adopting an inclusive education system – because I believe that such a system is well suited to address the inequalities that are specific to our social and educational contexts – I am aware of the challenges that would result from implementing such a radical systemic reform. I am also sensitive to the fact that there are stakeholders who have strong reservations about the viability of such a system of education. For example, some arguments against inclusive education stem from the very reasons that special education was developed in the first place (Florian, 1998). Florian reminds us that it was in fact mainstream education's failure to teach all learners that gave rise to the need for a separate system of special education. She goes on to highlight that special education has evolved as a mystified body of knowledge that only those working within it understand. Now, it is these professionals who are up in arms, arguing that the educational needs of their learners are difficult to understand without specialised training.

For me this argument does not hold water as I have worked in a special school setting and know that there is very little that is 'special' about how those learners are taught. To illustrate, most of those teaching in special schools start out with no special education qualifications, but are able to work with those learners, if certain requirements are met, for example: class sizes are small (the maximum number accommodated per class is 15) and each class has a classroom assistant, which halves the learner to teacher ratio. As a result, it is possible to address most learning needs when teachers are provided with resources and assisted to adjust.

The persistence of negative attitudes towards those who are different is another factor to keep in mind (Department of Education, 1997). Swart et al (2004) argue that teachers' attitudes, temperament, and support systems are fundamental to the success of inclusion, especially where learners with disabilities are involved. Therefore, pre-service education and training (hereafter referred to as PRESET) and in-service education and training (hereafter referred to as INSET) has to focus on addressing negative attitudes, otherwise the process of creating welcoming classroom environments will remain unattainable. In the same vein, Engelbrecht et al (2001: 257) argue that there is "*lack of effective in-service or pre-service training*" concerning how to implement inclusive education, which leaves teachers with very limited knowledge of this system. Although they reached this conclusion in 2001, not much seems to have changed. Similarly, Swart et al (2004:103) raise concerns about the "complexity and multidimensional(ity)" of implementing this system, as it necessitates changing schools' cultures and ethos to ensure that "appropriate curricula, support systems, teaching methods and means of communication are adapted to meet the diverse needs of all" (ibid: 82).

These changes are not easy to implement, unless teachers are adequately trained and feel supported in their work. Teachers are the key players in any innovation's implementation; therefore, sufficient attention should be given to their current practices and needs (Hay et al, 2001) to ensure that they can meet the demands of the innovation being implemented. Forlin and Engelbrecht (1998: 217-218) also list a number of concerns raised by regular education teachers about their inability to teach

all learners. Some of these concerns include inadequate training; the inability to identify needs in learners; lack of expertise to differentiate the curriculum; large class sizes, and resource shortages. All of these are valid concerns that should be addressed urgently, if inclusive education is to succeed. These concerns and threats point to the critical role played by teacher development in any reform process, especially such a complex one as inclusion. Unless teacher education equips educators with skills and builds up their confidence to work with all learners, it will not be possible to develop a truly inclusive and supportive education system.

Another threat to the success of inclusive education is the fact that inclusion differs greatly from the way schools operate at present. As a result, the teaching approaches advocated for inclusive education cannot be horizontally transferred, but will require vertical transfer. Hyde (1992:173) citing Joyce and Showers (1983) differentiates between horizontal and vertical transfer of knowledge and skills in the learning context. Horizontal transfer occurs when a new, but similar approach is assimilated into the established routine, whereas vertical transfer is necessary when the new approach differs significantly from the established routine (Hyde, 1992). The latter transfer, according to Joyce and Showers (1983), cited in Hyde (1992), can be facilitated using coaching: a service that is both uncommon and costly. Coaching is defined as a professional development strategy that involves

.. experts in a particular subject area or set of teaching strategies working closely with small groups of teachers to improve classroom practice and, ultimately, student achievement (Russo, 2004: 1).

As a country we do not have people who are trained to provide such coaching, and – at the moment – it is a service we cannot afford. This means that there is a distinct possibility that teachers will not make substantial changes in their classrooms, unless they see value in doing so. It will also be difficult to monitor and support classroom changes effectively.

Finally, there are two other issues that are likely to impact negatively on the implementation of inclusive education. The first is that inclusion is meant to follow on the success of C2005. Unfortunately, this curriculum framework has been poorly implemented due to what Christie (1999: 167) identifies as “poor planning, short notice and lack of capacity and funds at provincial level”. Like all policies, the implementation of inclusive education is also the responsibility of provinces, and there is no guarantee that they have the financial muscle and technical expertise to see it through. The second consideration is the difficult circumstances that some schools and their communities find themselves in – conditions that act as barriers to inclusion. For example, some schools serve very poor communities where rates of unemployment and sometimes substance abuse are very high. In most cases, middle-class parents have moved their children to better schools outside of their communities, leaving only the poor and unemployed to attend local schools. Often such schools are poorly resourced; have limited educational amenities; inadequate teaching and learning resources; large classes; inadequately trained teachers (Department of Education, 1997), and possibly a high staff turnover.



How do you boost the morale of teachers working in these schools, and how do you foster a culture of collaboration where priorities are survival? A lot of redress has taken place both educationally and socially, but the playing field is still not level. As Christie (1999: 162) rightly observes, "*conditions in the poorest and most marginalized communities have not improved.*" Therefore, it is important that those driving the implementation process acknowledge this reality, and make the necessary concessions; otherwise inclusive education will fail to redress the imbalances it is expected to.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

A new policy is a course of action that the government adopts, assuming that it will be of some good to the country. However, Christie (1999) argues that policy visions alone are not enough to bring about social and educational transformation. She suggests that a constant engagement of vision and circumstances on the ground is necessary to make long-lasting and meaningful changes. This can be facilitated through the continuous professional development of staff. This development should have a dual purpose: to improve the staff's capacity to handle the demands of change, and to change their attitudes and resistance to change. On the other hand, Hegarty (1994:128) is convinced that "*positive attitudes and willing teachers*" are also not sufficient to bring about the desired change. They need assistance to become competent in delivering quality education that addresses individual learning needs (ibid). It is in this vein that Hyde (1992:182) suggests that staff development programmes need to provide teachers with "*experiences in doing as well as in how to teach others*". That way, they

can see the potential of the new approach (ibid), and have enough confidence in their ability to make the new approach a reality in their classrooms.

This chapter has reviewed the various discourses that have, over the years, influenced how learners with disabilities have been perceived, and their educational needs addressed. The chapter also reviewed the policy framework within which the education of learners with diverse educational needs has taken place. Based on this review, this thesis argues that the post-apartheid South African education enterprise has been successful in developing and adopting policies that target educational inequalities. However, as this chapter has attempted to illustrate, in spite of the country's admirable inclusive education policy framework, signs of early difficulties in policy implementation are quickly emerging. This study is premised on the notion that policy interventions alone are not enough, as these do not always translate into effective and sustainable educational practice. The thesis asserts that unless the national advocacy programme on inclusive education is effectively implemented and teachers are recruited into, motivated, and convinced of the need to shift to an inclusive education system, implementation of EWP6 is doomed to fail, and LSEN will continue to be marginalised and excluded from learning.

The next chapter reviews literature that examines the challenges that face the education system in managing the change process from special education thinking to inclusive education thinking.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Policy into practice: The challenge of educational change

*Managing change is important. Without competent management, the transformation process can get out of control. But for most organizations, the much bigger challenge is leading change. Only leadership can blast through the many sources of corporate inertia. Only leadership can motivate the actions needed to alter behaviour in any significant way. Only leadership can get change to stick by anchoring it in the very culture of an organization (Kotter & Cohen, 1996:30).*

#### 3.1 Introduction

**Chapter One** of this thesis suggested that the 2001 adoption of *Education White Paper 6 - Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training system* was the South African democratic government's response to an apartheid system that had failed to meet the needs of the learner population, particularly those of learners facing barriers to learning. As such, this policy represents a paradigm shift from an autocratic and discriminatory philosophy to one that is inclusive (Naicker, 2000). Although inclusive education has been on the international agenda for over a decade now, it is new to the South African context. To complicate matters, as indicated in **Chapter One**, because of the differences in international and local definitions of inclusive education, there are many interpretations and understandings of what this system of education is about. Therefore, it is critical that the Ministry of Education carefully disseminates accurate information so that all stakeholders can have a common understanding of the concept (inclusive education), its principles and objectives, as well as the rationale for

adopting it. To this effect, identifying and planning the national advocacy and education programme as a short-term goal in the implementation of EWP6, is essential.

This thesis is premised on the belief that real inclusion is not merely a superficial shift from one form of service provision to another, but rather that it involves a much deeper transformation in such areas as beliefs and values (Doyle, 2002; Swart et al, 2004). In describing the shift, Doyle (2002) asserts that inclusion is different from mainstreaming in that it is a change in thinking. Citing Zepeda and Langenbach (1999), she states that:

Inclusion is a 'mindset' about educating students and not just a place or a method of delivering instruction. It is a philosophy [and] is part of the very culture of school (Doyle, 2002:41).

Obviously, this kind of shift requires a genuine willingness to accept and embrace the innovation, as well as an ability to implement it. However, Pather (2003) has voiced concern over the plight of teachers and schools who are caught between the drive to bring about change, and unclear ideas about how that change should be facilitated. This suggests that in order to get the buy-in (approval and participation) from teachers and other stakeholders, extensive advocacy programmes are needed. To build capacity for the implementation of this innovation, intensive and continuous professional development and training programmes need to be developed and put into operation. Furthermore, Burstein et al (2004:105), citing other researchers (Fullan, 1992; Fullan & Miles, 1992; McLeskey & Pugh, 1995), emphasise that inclusion "*is one of the more complex changes within educational reform*". As a result of this complexity, one can safely assume that this policy will make major demands on the way educational services are provided and, in particular, on the ways in which schools and classrooms

are organised and managed. In addition, this expected change in practice has huge implications for the structure, as well as the process of education, and this will undoubtedly have an impact on how inclusive education is perceived by practitioners. Therefore, the approaches and strategies that the ministry uses to diffuse the essential information during the advocacy and information phase will determine the extent to which the policy is understood and embraced.

Teachers' experiences of this process and their resultant understandings of the policy and the concept of inclusive education form the main focus of this study.

### **3.2 The rationale for the proposed change**

In **Chapter One**, I described how the post-apartheid government succeeded in amalgamating the 17 ethnically and racially segregated education departments under one national administration (Department of Education, 2005), which has total responsibility for policy development and quality control. Later on in this chapter, I will discuss how education is now administered at three levels: national, provincial, and local. In **Chapter Two**, I examined how the medical discourse has influenced educational provision, and how this influence has shifted the focus to learners and factors within them as the only source of learning difficulties. Conversely, this chapter also explored the ways in which general and special education have remained separate and, to a great extent, independent of each other. The biggest disadvantage of such a dual system of education in a developing context such as South Africa is that it is very costly to maintain and, therefore, unsustainable. For example, very few black

communities have access to special education services, and – for many years – learners with special education needs from these communities have been mainstreamed unintentionally (Green, 1991) and received little or no support. In developing contexts where resources are limited, it is common practise that the powerless – in this case learners with special educational needs – tend to be compromised. I have argued before that separate special education has not been successful in providing learners with disabilities with equal educational or social opportunities, and that a separate special school system places the very learners it was established to help at a disadvantage (Ntombela, 1998). In addition, preserving a dual system encourages regular classroom teachers to feel inadequately prepared to deal with the needs of learners who need special education services, and encourages the view that these learners are “deficient” – a practice that fails to address the source of the problem.

Nonetheless, if the preferred route was for the Ministry of Education to build special schools for the estimated 280 000 children of school-going age with disabilities and impairments, who are not in school (Department of Education, 2001a; Pather, 2003), how long would this take? An equally pertinent question is how would this project be funded? No one knows the answers to these questions, but my assumption is that it would be a very costly undertaking that would perpetuate the inequalities that are prevalent in our school system today. Again, it is my assumption that these are some of the reasons why the South African education authorities view capacity building in

mainstream schools as the only viable option for addressing the educational needs of all learners, and to facilitate inclusive education.

While these may represent noble reasons for change, not everybody in the education system understands and embraces them as such. This thesis suggests that factors such as poor information and education about inclusive education; the newly-adopted EWP6, and the rationale for it; and poor teacher training and support for the implementation of inclusive education in schools, tends to impact negatively on the innovation's chances of being understood, embraced, and effectively implemented. It has in fact been five years since the policy was released, yet available research suggests that vulnerable children still continue to be marginalised, and – at times – excluded from accessing and participating in education (Maile, 2004; Pendlebury & Enslin, 2004). In addition, new research points to the fact that teachers – particularly those outside of the nodal areas – have a poor understanding of the policy, and still lack the necessary knowledge and skills for implementing it and providing quality curricula and support for all learners (Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff, & Swart, 2000). This is not unique to South Africa. Similar reports from the international sphere (Tait & Purdie 2000; Burstein et al, 2004) also show this lack of preparedness, sounding a warning to the South African Ministry of Education that the road ahead is not going to be easy. Since inclusive education is such a complex reform, it cannot thrive without careful planning, dissemination, capacity building, implementation, resource allocation, and support. Available literature on educational change, for example, Fullan (1992), also suggests that many innovations fail because they are complex and are not sufficiently

understood by the very stakeholders who are meant to implement them. The latter claim is reiterated by Kotter and Cohen (1996:85) who assert that:

..the real power of a vision is unleashed only when most of those involved in an enterprise or activity have a common understanding of its goal and direction.

The challenge then is for the ministry to manage this reform agenda competently to ensure that there is enough consent to make change real and sustainable. The next section examines the ways in which this complexity might impact on the introduction and successful implementation of inclusive education in South African schools.

### **3.3 The nature of change**

**Chapter One** argued that the successful implementation of any innovation (e.g. a new policy such as EWP6) depends on the ways in which stakeholders in an organisation (e.g. a school) understand, implement, and manage change. The critical question to ask is how can stakeholders be assisted to reach an understanding of an innovation and to implement and manage the change process capably? An overview of research literature suggests that for successful and effective implementation to occur, the system needs to recognise and accommodate the complexity of the innovation; prepare the implementing organisations adequately by educating them about the innovation; provide them with professional development and training, as well as materials and human resources. This preparation, however, does not detract from the fact that on one hand, it might be technically simple to implement an educational innovation, yet – on the other – it is a socially complex process (Fullan, 1992). There seems to be general agreement over the complexity of educational change, mainly because schools are – by



nature – rigidly structured (hierarchies) that tend to operate counter to innovation in general. It is in this vein that Burstein et al (2004) state that schools and those who inhabit them, often find it difficult to change their thinking and practice, because:

Like other organizations, the school culture has a set of strongly embedded assumptions, values, and customs that encourage maintenance of the status quo (2004:105).

This appears to be a common characteristic of systems (de Brabandere, 2005). Doyle (2002) concurs, adding that the nature of school cultures can make it difficult to effectively implement change. According to her, the best way to approach school reform is through re-culturing, which she explains as changing group dynamics and enabling participants to evaluate themselves. She adds that the process of re-culturing equips stakeholders to think critically about why they do things in a particular way (ibid: 39).

This concept is discussed in more detail in **Chapter Four**.

Doyle is convinced that changing the culture of the education system should come before restructuring, if change is to last, and that this has to be pioneered by those in leadership because they are the most influential. Clarke (2000) agrees, and substantiates that re-culturing involves school personnel collectively deciding what to unlearn (from their past) and what to learn (for their future). If this shift does not take place, Slee (2001) cautions that teachers will be tempted to transfer special education thinking and behaviours to environments of inclusive schooling. This type of transfer should be discouraged as it perpetuates exclusionary practices and continues to keep many learners on the margins of schools and classrooms (ibid). It is for these reasons that Doyle (2002) supports re-culturing as being more critical to sustainable change

than restructuring, because it focuses on deeper issues such as behaviour, debating, creating, and committing to shared beliefs about the purpose of schools. Restructuring, on the other hand, only focuses on surface, organisational issues, such as which groups of learners are taught, where and how (ibid).

Further compounding the complexity of change is that it tends to stimulate both support and resistance among stakeholders in an organisation or system. As Clarke (2000) asserts, the plethora of changes facing educators in schools today brings with it new tensions, as well as new opportunities that have to be faced. Generally, people like familiar things and are not keen to change what they think works. On the other hand, change can also provide new – hopefully better – ways of doing things. Due to the uncertainty and ambiguity that change often brings about, Buchanan and Badlam (1999) point out that managing the change process is a complex activity. Citing Kakabadse and Parker (1984), the authors appropriately highlight that change in organisations is not a matter of adopting a particular truth, but also entails a debate about values and attitudes that are dominant, in order to introduce new systems and subsystems (Buchanan & Badlam, 1999: 12).

At present, policy reforms (inclusive education included) are viewed as mandates that come with very little preparation and support for those expected to implement them (Pather, 2003), even though – in principle – the Ministry of Education has committed itself to making the policy-making process open to stakeholders and role players (Department of Education, 1995; Kruss, 1998; Pather, 2003). Buchanan and Badlam's

definition is useful here in emphasizing the importance of creating conditions conducive to dialogue by those initiating change. The value of increasing opportunities for collegiality and dialogue among teachers is also highlighted by Hyde and Pink (1992). This dialogue is necessary to ensure that stakeholders get opportunities to interrogate and challenge the proposed values and attitudes. Buchanan and Badlam (1999) view it as highly critical that teachers – as agents of change – have a well developed commitment to change.

Commitment of this nature can only occur within the context of re-culturing (Doyle, 2002), in an environment where teachers are free to question, seek help, and to learn together. The fact that EWP6 is being introduced in tandem with other policy reforms in the South African education system (e.g. C2005, OBE, the RNCS, among others), makes such a dialogue crucial, particularly if teachers and other stakeholders are to clearly understand how the new policy (EWP6) ties in with the others. This is the context in which this study sought to investigate the ways in which teachers in the three schools understood the policy of inclusive education, and the extent to which they have been allowed to engage in the above processes.

This thesis is premised on the notion that the main building block of developing teachers' commitment to any reform is the development of their understanding of the motivation for the change, and the building of a school culture and environment that supports that innovation. With this in mind, the study explores two aspects, namely: the ways in which EWP6 is being disseminated in the education system and the factors that

enable or disable the introduction and implementation of inclusion, as well as the teachers' understandings of and commitment to the goals of this policy.

As indicated in this section, the ways in which an organisation – through its stakeholders – understands, implements, and manages change (e.g. a new policy such as EWP6), influences how successful the implementation of that policy will be. The next section reviews literature related to the management of change.

### **3.4 Management of change in education**

Gowin (1981) points out that in many societal contexts; schooling is a recognised route to success. As such, an education system that perpetuates the exclusion of some children from this route cannot be condoned. Inclusive education has emerged as a result of concerns over the failure of education to address the learning needs of all learners. This type of education is concerned with developing schools as learning communities, where all stakeholders participate in the teaching and learning process (Clarke, 2000). Its main agenda is to develop schools (teachers and support services) that cater for the learning needs of all learners. Within the South African policy context, EWP6 and the inclusive education system are the strategies aimed at achieving this goal. However, to be effective, the policy needs to be conceptualised, understood, and implemented as:

... an approach to educational change that has the twin purposes of enhancing student achievement and strengthening the schools' capacity for managing change (Hopkins, Ainscow, and West, 1994:68).

While the innovation is meant to address a serious need in our system Fullan (1992) cautions that – by and large – school reform is challenging, and, Burstein et al (2004) assert, inclusion is even more complex than other educational reforms. As already suggested in the previous section, this means that careful planning and preparation need to take place before this system is implemented, including the development of new strategies for school organisation and educator development.

This is particularly important with regard to the conclusions reached by the NCSNET and NCESS, which include the fact that personnel development has often been fragmented and unsustainable, leading to low morale and lack of creativity with reference to the delivery of the curriculum (Department of Education, 1997).

Within the context described above, translating this policy into practice has serious implications for the development of schools and all education personnel, particularly educators and support staff. As argued in the preceding sections, change involves learning new ways of doing things, and – like all learning – it can be confusing and painful, and takes time to accomplish (UNESCO, 1993: 111-115). Therefore, the ways in which the intended transition from the old to the new is introduced, managed, and supported, will determine how well stakeholders understand and embrace it. Most importantly, however, it will also determine how effective this transition will be.

In managing this change process, with whom does the responsibility to prepare teachers lie? After the restructuring of 1994, educational administration in South Africa

became tri-leveled (Rensburg, 2001). The school system is now administered at the national, provincial, and institutional level, each level having its own distinct role. The national level is responsible for the development of “policy frameworks, norms and standards across the system” (de Clercq, 2001: 42). In addition, it is tasked with monitoring and quality assurance in matters of policy implementation and the overall quality of education (ibid). The provincial level, in a similar manner to the national level, has the powers to develop policies, provided these do not contravene the nationally created framework (ibid). At the institutional level are day-to-day issues, or what is generally known as school governance. Obviously, what matters is not who takes responsibility for staff development, but rather that teachers know what they are supposed to do, and do so to the best of their abilities. Successful implementation of any reform will depend on how well the various levels interact with, and support, each other. This study examined the nature and quality of this interaction, and particularly how it functioned to inform teachers and to prepare them for the implementation of EWP6 in their schools.

Change does not happen overnight, and so too will developing inclusive practices in schools take time. What is encouraging, though, is that there are strategies that have been identified to support reforms (Burstein et al, 2004). These include preparing workers, in this case – classroom teachers – for change, building commitment to change, planning for change, and providing support that promotes and maintains change. All four aspects involve developing personnel and the system to handle the reform agenda. In addition, Burstein et al highlight the fact that teachers’ “values,

beliefs and attitudes towards change” guide their practice (2004:105). Therefore, it is important for teachers to understand and share the vision for change.

But, what exactly are the necessary conditions for effective implementation of EWP6 in South African schools? This is explored further in the next section.

### **3.5 Conditions for effective transformation**

Since EWP6 is a complex reform policy, it should be expected that its implementation will be fraught with numerous challenges, which – unless adequately addressed – might impact negatively on the innovation. Some of the challenges will include the development of teaching and support personnel; school and system improvement; and encouraging parental participation in educational matters. Failure to implement these changes effectively might lead to the rejection of the proposed reform, and ultimately to non-implementation at a school and classroom level. Some of these challenges are discussed in the sections below.

#### **3.5.1 Teachers’ professional development and support**

Guskey (2000:16) defines professional development as:

[all the] processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students.

This definition highlights the dual purpose of professional development: to improve teachers' proficiency in their work, and to improve learners' learning. In other words, without adequate professional development, teachers cannot keep up to date with new knowledge in their field, and, as a result, learners will be at a disadvantage. It is, therefore, important that we encourage teachers to become lifelong learners, since the field of education is – like other professional fields – dynamic. It is equally important for the system of education as a whole to become a learning organisation so that it is better positioned to support teachers in their learning.

There have been several changes in South African education since 1994. These changes, as indicated earlier, are often initiated at the national level, although the responsibility for their implementation lies with provinces and districts. It was in view of this that the Provincial Review Report of 1997, cited in Kruss (1998), questioned the capacity of provincial education departments to implement change and develop quality education. Although this occurred in connection with the development of C2005, it is an important question that can be applied to all aspects of educational change, including the implementation of EWP6. Its importance is heightened by the fact that most education officials – like the majority of teachers – have for too long been made to believe that learners who deviate from the “norm” are not the regular school's problem, and belong in special classes or schools where they can be taught by specially trained teachers. Most of them were trained and socialised according to the “deficit” model of education, which views school failure as a pathological condition (Skritic, 1991). This model, which is informed by psychology and scientific management, is premised on the



assumption that schools are organised rationally and, therefore, failure is an individual problem resulting from deficits within the child. Because of these assumptions, interventions tend only to be curative (e.g. remedial education) (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

Inclusive education represents a significant shift from this model. It is based on a social model that challenges the assumptions of the old medical model and seeks to transform the school system. It can be considered an intervention strategy that ensures that all learners can access and participate actively in the learning opportunities provided by their schools. To this effect, Mittler (2000) describes inclusion as something contrary to the “deficit” model, which proposes a different way of looking at the origins of learning difficulties. He defines it as a system of education that is based on a system of values that accepts and celebrates differences resulting from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background, level of educational achievement, or disability (Mittler, 2000: 3).

Obviously, this thinking is fundamentally different from the model used to train most teachers and officials in South Africa. To change their beliefs, knowledge, and skills about new knowledge pertaining to the teaching and learning process, they all require extensive professional development. It comes as no surprise that there are many researchers and theorists in education who warn of the serious challenges that are likely to emerge during the implementation of the policy of inclusion (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001; Allan, 2003). Similarly, Fullan with Stiegelbauer’s statement that

“educational change depends on what teachers do and think” (1991:117) is worthy of noting in any reform agenda, more so in the context of a complex reform such as inclusive education. It makes sense then to assume that all teachers – including personnel performing administrative duties in schools and in district and provincial offices – are to be provided with training and professional development that will enable them to fully understand and embrace the new paradigm and its rationale, before they can be expected to facilitate and support the development of inclusive learning environments. Several sessions of engaging with the philosophy and rationale of this system will be necessary, before teachers can understand it and change their thinking and ways of doing. They will also need to understand what needs to change and why. In addition, to change their actions, they need opportunities to observe and practice the “how”.

Essentially, in the context of OBE – in general – and inclusive education – specifically – all teachers are now expected to address individual learner needs and to provide all learners with quality education. In addition, they are expected to learn new ways of doing things, such as team teaching and collaborating with other teachers to solve problems in the teaching and/or learning context. Most importantly, they have to learn how to create welcoming schools and classrooms, where all learners (and their parents) feel accepted and valued. All these new demands will mean that teacher preparedness is a critical factor in the development of inclusive schools. It is crucial then that those engaged in pre- and in-service education and training start supporting

teachers in their learning, so that they can gain the skills and confidence to address a diversity of educational needs in their classrooms (Rose, 2001).

For obvious reasons, adopting a new policy does not automatically translate into a change in practice. As Fullan contends, teacher development forms a core concept of implementation in that, "if implementation involves new behaviours and beliefs, teacher development in relation to these new learnings is *sine qua non*" (1992:23).

Changing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, takes time as these are deeply grounded in the paradigm/s people subscribe to. For example, if teachers have been trained to focus on learner deficiencies and weaknesses, introducing a new, differently positioned policy will not automatically translate into teachers focusing on systemic deficiencies. For the latter to happen, they need information about what needs to change in the current practice, as well as what form that change should take, before alternatives can be recommended. If the Ministry of Education fails to effectively diffuse such information on the proposed innovation, Guskey (2000) argues that teachers and other stakeholders in schools might be unwilling to embrace the new paradigm, and ultimately implement the policy, or – alternatively – they may attempt to implement something that they do not understand.

Not only do teachers, as significant initiators of innovation implementation, need information and training to give them necessary knowledge and skills, they also require support. The latter will enable them to question, debate, collaborate, explore, and learn new strategies individually and collectively in order to make the shift the new policy

necessitates. This learning process is critical, if teachers' behaviours (their activities, skills, and practices) and beliefs (assumptions, understandings, and commitments) are to change (Fullan, 1992). Those facilitating the learning process need to acknowledge that even though change tends to affect teachers collectively in their work context, each teacher experiences it at a personal level (Fullan with Stiegelbauer, 1991). In other words, each individual has to be given opportunities to make sense of their experiences of change, as this will determine how they respond to it. It is only when they have continuously engaged in activities that develop new ways of thinking and doing that they can really begin to understand and embrace the innovation.

This is particularly important when one considers that a large component of the South African teaching force is a product of the apartheid teacher education, which occurred in inadequate and under-resourced settings in traditionally black colleges of education. According to Dean (1995), the classrooms in these contexts were characterised by repression, lack of free enquiry, a fear of authority, and a rigid, authoritarian and hierarchical bureaucracy, which resulted in the absence of independent thinking or critical and reflective practice. Furthermore, as Lemmer (1998) asserts, this tradition has produced teaching approaches that have tended to be passive, and examination- and rote-learning-oriented, and which unfortunately persist in the new system of education.

As Moletsane (1998b) argues, the challenge then is for pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes to adopt the democratic principles underpinning the

new inclusive policy, if they are to equip teachers with the skills to design and implement democratic education programmes. Only then, she maintains, will teachers be able to teach their learners the principles of democratic living and learning, and only then can education be truly inclusive. Harber (2001) concurs that for educational reforms in post-apartheid South Africa to succeed, teachers need to be skilled and knowledgeable. Furthermore, he adds,

in order for schools to become more supportive of the learning process, the whole school (human and physical resources) has to be developed. ... Initial and in-service education must therefore play an important part in the transformation of the education system” (Harber, 2001: 75).

What is more, the reforms proposed by the policy of inclusive education cannot be tackled with a business-as-usual attitude; these reforms are meant to force teachers to change their ways of thinking as well as teaching. To illustrate, teachers have always worked in isolation in their classrooms. Within the context of inclusive education – in order to create supportive structures and develop methodologies that make it possible to meet the needs of all learners – they need to learn to work collaboratively and take shared responsibility for the learners’ education. Working collaboratively is critical to the development of “learning processes of reflection and dialogue” (Day, Hall & Whitaker, 1998: 19). Moreover, many teachers were not taught to explore alternatives in education, or to appreciate the role they can play in changing situations (Moletsane, 1998b). These and other historical hurdles must be removed by re-educating teachers in paradigms of education that are critical, democratic, and inclusive, they must be encouraged and supported as they move from one way of thinking and doing to another. A paradigm shift will only take place when two kinds of change occur among

teachers, that is, change of practice (reality) as well as change of perceptions ,  
(De Brabandere, 2005).

Lomofsky, Thomson, Gouws, and Engelbrecht (1998) maintain that the biggest challenge to education reform involves giving teachers the confidence to believe that they can rise to the demands of the task at hand. Achieving this demands a change in the current thinking and teaching practices of teachers and those responsible for educating and supporting them. Wagner (2000) suggests that those responsible for teacher education have a critical role to play in driving the change process forward, as they can help identify and shape the new competencies teachers need. It is in this vein that Lazarus and Donald (1995) and Lomofsky et al (1998) suggest that pre-service education and training should give all trainee teachers knowledge and skills to respond to special needs in the classrooms. In-service education programmes, they add, should also seek to sensitise mainstream teachers to issues around special needs, while focusing on changing the current practices and thinking of teachers and those in support services. Last, for special educators, they recommend changing the conventional training programme so that it becomes broader, embracing more than one disability, and enabling educators to support other teachers in mainstream schools.

Right at the outset, it is important to understand the type and quantity of organisational support needed to produce and sustain change (Guskey, 2000). As a result, Guskey (2000:149) suggests a systemic approach to professional development that focuses both on individual learning as well as on improving “the capacity of the organisation to

solve problems and renew itself.” This means that while it is important that pre-service and in-service programmes give teacher trainees and practising teachers the necessary knowledge to make inclusive education happen, it is also essential that there is assurance of organisational support. As available literature argues, true change only occurs when teachers feel they own that change, when they subscribe to its value and are confident of the availability of support for its implementation (Day et al, 1998).

Regardless of the strategies adopted to develop our teaching force, emphasis should be on producing a workforce that is – by virtue of its education and training – confident, critical, and adaptable to the changing needs of the society it serves. In our quest to equip our teachers for the challenges ahead, we should guard against what Ainscow (1999) and Slee (2001) refer to as transplanting special education thinking and practices into mainstream schools, as this will not create inclusive schools. We also need to be constantly reminded that inclusion is a journey, a process, and not a destination (Mittler, 2000). Thus, developing and maintaining an inclusive setting calls for positive teacher attitudes, knowledge, skills, and commitment to the process (Mittler, 1991, cited by Saleh, 1996; Department of Education, 1997; Tait & Purdie, 2000; Allan, 2003; Burstein et al, 2004).

The abovementioned discussion suggests that teachers are a critical aspect of education, and that an education system cannot be better than the quality of its teachers. If a confident and skilled workforce is an invaluable asset in any education system, then staff development becomes critical to school development (Brooke-Smith,

2003). Within the present system of education, a small group of specialist teachers – who are responsible for learners with learning difficulties – are seen as experts. This situation needs to change as it is not in line with the spirit of an inclusive education system, which makes all educators responsible for these learners. As Rose (2001, citing Florian, 1998a, b) maintains, to create the condition for inclusion, teaching roles and responsibilities need to be re-conceptualised. That is the only way we can ensure that all staff accept full responsibility for the education of all children in their care.

The study reported in this thesis examined the ways in which teachers in the three schools felt sufficiently informed about inclusive education, and the extent to which they felt adequately prepared and supported for their new roles in an inclusive education system.

### **3.5.2 School development**

The first challenge in the successful implementation of EWP6 in schools is the development of the school context, and the creation of an environment that is accepting of, and conducive to, inclusive education. A primary premise of this thesis is the notion that teachers work in schools as organisations, therefore, staff development cannot be meaningful or successful unless integrated with institutional development (Fullan, 1992). According to Donald et al (1997), such integration involves developing schools to the point where they can design school policies that support the wellbeing of all learners. In other words, supportive teaching and learning environments need to be created; the involvement of community in school life increased; the school community



members' personal skills developed, and access to support services reorganised increased (ibid).

The need to provide a supportive culture is supported by Wagner (2000) who asserts that changing schools will demand the continuous involvement of the whole school community in defining and redefining goals and practices. However, like Doyle (2002), he cautions that it is difficult and time consuming to change the culture of schools. To help schools move forward, Wagner (2000) suggests identifying clear goals, core values, and creating a caring and collaborative environment in which all stakeholders (teachers, learners, parents, and the community) work together for the common purpose of implementing an inclusive education system. This, he adds, shifts the responsibility from teachers to the whole school, and it develops a learning community that uses the skills of many to make ongoing improvements (ibid). Guskey (2000) also supports adopting a systemic approach to change, adding that professional and organisational development takes place within a larger context.

The second challenge is that for any innovation to work, including inclusive education, schools need to be well-resourced (in terms of both material and human resources) so that teachers and learners have all the assistance they need to make teaching and learning effective. For example, there are still schools in previously disadvantaged areas that lack the basic teaching and learning resources that many schools in other parts of the country take for granted. Some are still without electricity, running water and textbooks, have inadequate furniture, and no libraries or laboratories (Ntombela,

2003). In fact, quite recently, several schools were in the news because they lack proper classrooms. One was even reported to be using a taxi rank for teaching purposes (Makhaye, 2006). All these factors demand urgent attention, if we are serious about redressing imbalances and developing inclusive schools. In addition to material and human resources, Guskey (2000) lists appropriate expertise, technology, technical support, time, and information, as other critical resources fundamental to improving school environments.

Third, the social climate of schools is another important element in the implementation of an innovation. Globally, millions of learners have been failed by education systems that either make inappropriate provision for them, or exclude them from schooling (Saleh, 1996). As a result, the need to develop schools that respond to individual learner needs, support learning, and celebrate differences has become high on the international agenda. Inclusion seems most suited to address this need as it promises to be efficient and cost-effective, to provide quality education for all learners, and to create welcoming schools and communities.

Meeting the above conditions, while not easy, is nevertheless achievable. What remains a bigger challenge to the effective implementation of EWP6 as an innovation are the social and educational factors within schools and the wider education system. These are discussed below.

### **3.5.2.1 Changing school and classroom practice**

As stated in previous sections, one of the assumptions underpinning educational reform in South Africa is that change, in general, and classroom change, in particular, depends on the motivation and initiative of the individual teacher (Taylor, Muller & Vinjevoold, 2003). On one hand, teachers are viewed as critical agents of any reforms, including EWP6. Yet documented evidence suggests that they tend to resist change, and that reforms involving a new curriculum and pedagogical styles are difficult to implement, particularly at classroom level (Fullan, 1993; Davidoff & De Jong, 1997, cited by Kruss, 1998). Kruss also cites Cohen (1991) who argues that no matter how enthusiastic they are about new policy frameworks, teachers tend to find it difficult to learn and adopt new ways of practice, if the training provided is minimal and the changes introduced are complex. As a result, she suggests that more attention needs to be paid to their personal and professional development, if we are to see lasting change in their practices (Kruss, 1998).

In light of this evidence, how possible is it to keep teachers motivated and resourceful? What strategies can the Ministry of Education use to change their patterns of practice in the classrooms? And – more importantly – what can PRESET and INSET providers do to help teachers make the necessary shifts in their beliefs and philosophies about interactions in schools and classrooms within an inclusive education system? No clear-cut answers to these questions exist. Several researchers suggest that to change the paradigm influencing a school, we need to change its culture (assumptions, beliefs, and values), right to the point where the new culture has become an accepted part of the

organisation's life, or it reaches institutionalisation (Doyle, 2002; Fullan, 1993 cited in Fink, 2000). It is only when this happens that the institution will commit the necessary resources (human and material) to the implementation of the innovation. In addition, the new culture is then likely to bring about cognitive and behaviour changes among teachers and learners (Fullan, 1991, cited in Fink, 2000).

Clarke (2000) observes that schools can purposefully become learning organisations (a concept he borrowed from Senge, 1990), by allowing learners (young and old) to collaboratively choose and decide their learning and relearning (Clarke, 2000). Learning organisations, as viewed by Brooke-Smith (2003), have cultures that promote learning at both organisational and personal levels. Furthermore, such learning organisations are characterised by teachers deliberately and collaboratively pursuing “the question of how well their students are doing in their studies, relating this to their teaching strengths and weaknesses and purposefully refining and developing new approaches” to teaching and learning (Clarke, 2000: 23). Schools that reach these levels have been termed “moving schools”, as stakeholders collectively act in response to their changing environment, and are determined to continue developing (Stoll & Fink, 1996: 86).

### **3.5.2.2 System development**

It is important to keep in mind that classrooms and schools are but subsystems of a bigger system, and that their development has to be seen within the context of the wider system. Teachers and schools cannot develop and change within a dysfunctional educational system (from the district as the first line of influence, to the province and

national as distant, but driving influences). While teachers and schools are being developed, it is equally important to identify existing barriers to learning and participation within the wider system, and then to identify and/or develop mechanisms to break these down. This, hopefully, would enable the system not only to identify, but also to overcome and prevent potential barriers, thereby encouraging the development of welcoming teaching and learning environments (Department of Education, 1997).

On one hand, the policy of inclusive education and training is in line with the country's wider objectives of developing a democratic, equitable, and non-racial society. On the other hand, there is no indication – as yet – of how the various levels of the system will be transformed, and particularly how those in administration will be developed to facilitate and support the sort of change required. It is unclear how resources will be allocated so that all those in need will have access to them. Furthermore, it remains to be seen if the policy is practicable and achievable with the available resources. And, at a remote level, there is still an uncertain relationship between national and provincial government. The two levels are supposed to work in collaboration, but, as Harber (2001) claims, it is not uncommon for them to disagree and to criticise each other. The question this raises is to what extent can this dissonance obstruct the effective dissemination of information about inclusive education and – ultimately – the effective implementation of the policy at a district level? This study sought to understand this within the context of the three participating primary schools.

As Rizvi and Lingard observe:

Reform for educational justice is complex, and requires attention not only to issues of the political economy of schooling – concerns of access and equity – but also to issues of the culture of schooling; that is, the way things are named and represented, the manner in which difference is treated and the ways in which the values, significations and norms which govern life in schools are negotiated established (1996: 24-25).

Thus, if the challenge of developing the system is not dealt with adequately, it has the potential to seriously undermine and/or derail the process of transformation at all levels.

### **3.5.2.3. Political economy of schooling**

The political economy of schooling within the South African context is obscured by the challenges of system development. Transforming education from one system to another is a complicated and uneven process that requires a lot of time and resources (Hartshorne, 1999; Wagner, 2000). It is for this reason that Harber (2001), while applauding the drive in South Africa to extend educational opportunities to all, also cautions that achieving such reforms will be a difficult task.

There are other practical difficulties that the Ministry of Education faced in its efforts to transform the system of education in 1994. According to Young and Kraak (2001), these problems included the fact that it has been impossible to address the gross inequalities created by apartheid policies in a short space of time. Furthermore, the creation of new institutional capacity and expertise could not be rushed; no matter how committed the new government was to change. In addition, there were enormous demands placed on South Africa's limited economic resources, including demands to meet basic human needs in health, education, housing, and welfare services (Donaldson, 2001; Wolpe, 1992). As a result, the economic and other resources

necessary to rectify the imbalances that apartheid introduced and entrenched in the education system (and other spheres of life), are not readily available, and are only likely to be obtainable over the long term (Wolpe, op. cit.).

The immediate consequences of this lack of resources in the short term will have different impacts on various sectors of the community. For example, the issue of cost sharing and school fees schemes is likely to place learners from poor families and those enrolled in schools in poor communities at a disadvantage (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996). Similarly, shifting the burden of educational provision to parents and/or communities (Chisholm, 1997; Karlsson et al, 2001) has a serious impact on the number of children who can access education. There is also an impact on the quality of education that schools in poor areas can offer. In poorer contexts, the government faces the huge challenge of providing access to schooling for all children in the country. In the previous chapter (section 2.3.1.1), I indicated that the government has recently declared some schools in poor communities as 'free schools': schools where no fees will be charged to enable children from these communities to access education. However, there are concerns regarding the quality of education in these schools, and Fataar (1997: 80) has already sounded a warning against the provision of access to non-quality education, saying that,

quantitative expansion, delinked from the notion of quality, would tend to reinforce existing inequalities in presently disadvantaged schools.

According to Meerkotter (1998), former white schools are still better resourced and even more privileged because they have not inherited the problems of the apartheid

past. Wolpe (1992) advances a similar argument, stating that the advantages enjoyed by schools in traditionally white communities have been historically created. As a result of their advantaged position (socio-economic and resource wise), these schools are better positioned to attract learners who can afford to pay high fees and, so – in the process – these schools maintain their advantaged position (Chisholm, 1997; Oldfield, 2001). Because of this “marketisation of the public school system” (Oldfield, 2001:44), it will be difficult – if not impossible – to achieve equality in the near future – at least – since those institutions which inherited more, will continue to have more. It is for this reason that Badat (1997) encourages policy makers to avoid focusing exclusively on the issue of equality, as it distracts from the realities of the education context, namely limited access to education and shortage of institutions. According to him, educational equality cannot be achieved without economic growth, and vice versa.

While these are important issues that need serious consideration in the development of an inclusive system, there are two main obstacles to the implementation of EWP6. The first is overcoming the shortage of skills among those in administration, who – in Doyle’s (2002) view – are key players in driving and supporting change. The second is ensuring that essential resources such as water, electricity, and classrooms, are available to previously deprived communities, so that all schools start on more or less the same foot. The former is crucial in ensuring that all those in leadership can disseminate information, facilitate dialogue, support collaborative relationships, and create possibilities for “beliefs-driven-change” (Doyle, 2002: 54). The latter applies more to communities that were historically disadvantaged and neglected, as it would be



duplicitous to expect these schools to address social justice issues when their basic human rights are being violated. Ignoring these “priorities of redress and equity” (Oldfield, 2001: 37) will result in deeper polarisation between schools serving rich and poor communities.

Earlier on I referred to the fact that tensions have been observed between the provinces and the national government (Harber, 2001). My assumption is that these tensions stem from the fact that opposition parties on a provincial and national level sometimes have different agendas and priorities. Evidence suggests that although the Ministry of Education is responsible for policy frameworks, it is practically “separated from implementation and delivery at district and school levels” (Oldfield, 2001: 42, citing De Clercq, 1998). It is no wonder, then, that provincial departments are viewed as lacking the capacity to manage and implement policy reforms (Kruss, 1998, citing the Provincial Review Report of 1997).

Whether the source of tension between national and provincial levels is incoherent priorities or a vote of no confidence, it remains a serious barrier to transformation, especially where such a major and complex policy is concerned. At this late stage, it is no longer possible to establish the extent to which the provinces participated in the EWP6 policy process. But the ideal would have been for national government to work collaboratively with all provinces, keeping them on board from policy initiation right down to the development of implementation guidelines, to ensure that all arms of the system were moving synchronously.

#### **3.5.2.4 De-contextualised reform**

The last barrier to transforming the education system is the fact that policy proposals are said to have borrowed ideas from international experience and literature, particularly from developed contexts that do not share the same “socio political democratic agendas and aspirations” as South Africa (de Clercq, 1997: 144). The importance of context has already been highlighted (Fullan, 1999; Fink, 2000) and cannot be overemphasised. Apart from the school context, reformers also need to consider the community and national contexts (ibid). For example, is the proposed change in line with the community’s perceptions of what a good school is? What about the “larger political influences” (Fink, 2000: 42) of the country? Are they promoting or preventing change?

In addition, Fullan (1999) highlights the difficulty of replicating innovations. In other words, conditions, beliefs, expertise, and values that make an innovation succeed in one context (country, community, or school) may be lacking in another, and lead to failure. This is not unique to widely different contexts such as developed and developing countries, but is also likely to occur in schools within the same country, because different schools have different cultures (Guskey, 2000). Guskey adds that assumptions of uniformity are likely to lead to unsuccessful reforms. In our context, schools differ significantly from one another – depending on historical factors – and as a result, it will not be practical to expect them to move forward simultaneously. Linked to this is the fact that most of the proposals lack strategies for implementation and do

not evaluate implementation strategies from the countries they drew on (de Clercq, 1997). The South African context has unique complexities brought about by its history; as a result a developed and developing world exist side-by-side in our country. It is the developing world sector that is in dire need of development, and this cannot be achieved using imported first-world theories and strategies. Instead, solutions are required that take into account the different starting points for the different sectors, and which rely on readily available resources.

Furthermore, the social and political contexts in which the Ministry of Education develops an education system are closely linked to the country's economy. Essentially, this means that the education policies and reforms they propose cannot exist outside of the prevailing economic context. Jansen (2001), however, maintains that this view – plausible as it is – is not totally true in the South African education context. Instead, he argues that between 1994 and 1999, the state was more concerned with settling policy struggles in the political arena than reforming educational practices. Among the factors he cites as proof of this political symbolism is the importance assigned to policy production, rather than its implementation; the absence of implementation strategies during, or soon after policy pronouncements; and over-reliance on international consultants (Jansen, 2001: 272-276).

Jansen's analysis touches a nerve – there is a problem with service delivery in South Africa. Sparks (2003: 37) calls it "bureaucratic thrombosis": an acquired, disconcerting record of adopting good policies that are not implemented, and of unspent budgets in

critical areas such as education and health in provinces where the need

Since such observations were not unfounded, what guarantee was there that the period between 1999 and 2004 would bring about consolidation and serious delivery? Fortunately, as discussed earlier, EWP6 came with an implementation strategy involving short-, medium-, and long-term goals. But is this enough to ensure effective implementation? This study sought to examine this in detail.

### **3.5.3 Parental and community involvement in education**

Sarason (1990) cites failure to change power relationships within the system of education as one reason for reform failure. The South African Schools Act of 1996 tried to effect such change by acknowledging that parents (and their children) are the main stakeholders in education, and it granted them more power in educational matters than they have had in the past. Increased power entrenches parents' right to choose where (and how) they want their children to be educated. As such, parents are completely responsible for the governance of their children's schools, and are seen as a source of support in the teaching-learning environment (Department of Education, 1996). The report by the NCSNET and NCESS also acknowledges that lack of parental recognition and involvement is a barrier to learning (Department of Education, 1997). As a result, in EWP6, the role of parents in the education of their children is emphasised. However, at the time of writing this thesis, there are talks of revising SASA and withdrawing some of the powers granted to parents.

This move to revise SASA has probably been prompted by the reality that the majority of parents do not have the level of education or sophistication necessary to embrace these responsibilities. Many still need to be trained so that they understand their role, and are capable of functioning at the new level of expectation (Donaldson, 2001). Their ability to be trained is dependent on increased literacy levels, something that will not be easy to achieve quickly in a developing context. While recognising the importance of involving parents in efforts to implement inclusive education, the study focused specifically on the views and experiences of teachers.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

By adopting EWP6, the Ministry of Education has committed itself to the creation of a system of special needs education that is an “integrated component of our education system” (Department of Education, 2001: 4). An education and training system like this has serious implications for the present system, which has been influenced by a deficit or medical model, as well as by past political inequalities. Based on democratic practices, the new education system has the potential to set the agenda for the development of a democratic and inclusive society (Naicker, 1999). It also seeks to move the focus away from learners’ special needs, so that changes in the system can be effected, and all forms of exclusion removed. All this necessitates a paradigm shift in the way learners are viewed, how the curriculum and learning environments are organised, and how teachers teach. Achieving this will not only require a great deal of time and effort, it will also demand an incredible quantity of human and material resources.

Even in our enthusiasm to change our system of education to an inclusive one, it is useful to consider some of the factors that promote successful change. UNESCO (1993: 119-120) highlights the following factors as being crucial to creating an atmosphere that is conducive to change. These include a clear understanding of the purpose of reforms; realistic priorities that take into consideration all other demands; motivation; a supportive environment; the availability of resources to achieve set goals; and evaluation. These factors have to be kept in mind as the reform process unfolds.

Finally, in driving the process of change from one system to another, it is important that the Ministry of Education focuses not only on structural changes – as they do not bring about lasting changes – but also on changing the culture in schools (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Guskey, 2000; Doyle, 2002), as this is the most critical aspect of school life. Stoll and Fink (1996) argue that it is almost impossible to achieve anything when culture works against you, and this is relevant since school cultures are contextualised, and schools form part of a bigger system. Furthermore, unless the culture of the whole system of education is turned around to work for, and not against, the development of an inclusive system of education, this policy will remain an illusive and/or elusive dream. Like Doyle (2002), I am convinced that the Ministry of Education should channel all its energies (and resources) into re-culturing the system, which entails changing the culture of schools and the culture of communication between and within the different levels in the system. For example, if we honestly believe that learning is both an individual and social activity, there is a need to develop a culture of collaboration within and between

schools to facilitate and promote teachers' learning, not only during times of reform but throughout their careers. This has implications on how professional development programmes are planned, administered, and evaluated. In addition, adequate and effective lines of communication need to be maintained to ensure that stakeholders' voices are heard and taken into consideration, especially during reforms. Expecting teachers to adopt and implement innovations that they have had no input in, is contrary to the principles of democracy and the philosophy of inclusion.

The next chapter will review different conceptual and theoretical frameworks that informed the study. The concept of re-culturing will be taken up again as one of the conceptual frameworks.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

*In deciding whether or not to adopt an innovation, individuals depend mainly on the communicated experience of others much like themselves who have already adopted a new idea. These subjective evaluations of an innovation flow mainly through interpersonal networks. So we must understand the nature of networks in order to understand the diffusion process (Rogers, 2003: 331).*

#### 4.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapters, the policy statement, *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education - Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* of July 2001, was developed from the report of the NCSNET and NCESS (Department of Education, 1997), which, in many ways, was influenced by national calls for redress and equity, as well as international calls for the development of learner-centred, responsive systems of education. Through this policy statement, the South African government reaffirms its commitment to creating special needs education as an integral part of the general education system.

This study utilised a multi-site case study design, involving three primary schools located in different community contexts in the Greater Durban area, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The study investigated teachers' experiences and understanding of this policy statement in their schools, and the extent to which they feel knowledgeable, prepared, and supported for their new roles in the implementation of the policy. With



this in mind, the strategies used by the Ministry of Education, to diffuse the new policy of inclusion EWP6 to the school level, were examined. In this chapter I discuss the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study.

## **4.2. Conceptual frameworks**

Two conceptual frameworks were used to inform data collection and analysis. These were the concept of re-culturing (Doyle, 2002; Clarke, 2000; Stoll & Fink, 1996) and the philosophy of inclusion (Mittler, 2000; Engelbrecht, 1999; UNESCO, 1999; Jenkinson, 1997).

### **4.2.1 The philosophy of inclusion**

The philosophy of inclusion provided a broad conceptual framework for this study. This philosophy has become the core of education policies internationally, and has become the centre of debates regarding effective strategies to support learners experiencing difficulties in education (Engelbrecht, 1999). Although the inclusive education movement was born in wealthy countries of the North (Dyson & Forlin, 1999), where it emerged as a challenge to exclusionary policies and practices, it has also become a preferred strategy to address the learning needs of all learners (UNESCO, 1999a), especially in countries of the South. It is a rights-based movement, entrenching the right of all children – irrespective of their differences – to be educated together as proclaimed by the Convention on the Right of the Child. Furthermore, it seeks to overthrow exclusionary paradigms and practices.

This movement can be said to have matured in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, where inclusive education was on the agenda. Four years later in Spain, the *Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education* proclaimed inclusion as a right, and re-emphasised the need to provide children with special needs access to regular schools as a means of developing an inclusive society, and attaining education for all (UNESCO, 1994). In Salamanca, the concern was equally divided between providing quality education to children in special schools and to other marginalised groups of children, such as street children, children in employment, and children from ethnic minorities (Dyson & Millward, 2000).

#### **4.2.1.1 What is inclusive education?**

Jenkinson (1997) defines inclusive education as schools taking responsibility for addressing the needs of *all* children, and teachers learning to differentiate and adapt the curriculum and teaching techniques in line with the varied needs and capabilities of individual learners in their classrooms. She adds that such a system focuses on restructuring the whole school and demands that all the resources in the school be used to ensure that each learner gets an appropriate education (ibid). Similarly, Engelbrecht (1999) and Lunt and Norwich (1999) contend that contrary to popular belief, an inclusive philosophy in education applies to all learners, not only those who have disabilities or are somehow vulnerable. It also applies to all those learners for

whom the curriculum is inflexible (Slee, 2001) and the whole schooling experience irrelevant. These learners might include, among others, those who speak a language that is different from the LoLT; those who have disabling conditions; and those who come from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

Inclusive education is a system of education that challenges social and educational inequality on one hand, and values, welcomes, and celebrates learner differences on the other (Mittler, 2000). Its focus is on “reaching the unreached” (UNESCO, 1999a: 10) by removing all barriers that exclude some categories of learners from participating in the life of schools and society (Mittler, 2000). Similarly, Dyson and Millward (2000) characterise inclusive education as non-discriminatory, be it on the basis of culture, gender, disability or any other factor that is seen as significant in the society. In this kind of education, all learners in a community are actively involved, and have equal rights to access a curriculum that is culturally valued, irrespective of their differences (ibid). In other circles, inclusion is viewed as a process (Grenot-Scheyer, Fisher & Staub, 2001; Department of Education, 2001), a journey during the course of which teachers can develop their experience and increase their ability and confidence to work with all learners (Mittler, 2000). He also views it as an endless journey:

a vision, a road to be travelled, but a road without ending and a road with all kinds of barriers and obstacles, some of them visible and some of them in our own heads and hearts (Mittler: 2000:xi).

The journey is endless because the learning context is dynamic; there will always be barriers to learning, development, and participation in the learning process. Inclusion is also an endless journey because change is a constant in life, therefore, schools and

teachers cannot afford to stay the same and still be effective. However, without clear information (and some guidance) on what needs to be addressed and how, it will be difficult to influence their thinking and change their styles of behaviour (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Earlier on in **Chapter One** it was indicated that some barriers are permanent and some are transitory, some intrinsic and some extrinsic, and that they can surface at any time. Therefore, teachers need to be constantly watchful to see that no learners are being left behind or excluded. Since teachers are so important to learners' educational experiences, everything should be done to give them relevant knowledge and skills to perform their jobs well. Within the context of their ever-changing role, continuous professional development is needed to re-skill teachers and organisational development to re-tool schools to effectively respond to changing learning conditions and needs. This makes the continuous professional development of teachers non-negotiable.

It is in this vein that Mittler (2000) argues that the focus of inclusion is not on educating disabled learners in regular schools, but on changing schools to become more responsive to the needs of all learners, and examining how the system is assisting teachers to take responsibility for teaching all the learners in their care. In his view, inclusion is also concerned with the preparation of teachers to reach those who have been excluded, who are not benefiting from the school system, and those labelled as having special needs in education (ibid: vii-viii).

Grenot-Scheyer et al (2001:5) share the same view, suggesting that inclusive schools are “student-centered, democratic, reflective communities that view diversity as a strength and an opportunity”. Echoing this view, Jenkinson (1997) adds that the concept of inclusive schooling does not deny that many learners with disabilities have special educational needs, but emphasises the need to identify those needs and to find means to address them so that learners can learn. She goes on to explain that this type of education is not only learner-focused but rights-focused as well. A rights-focused education emphasises the right of all children to take part in their society’s mainstream activities – including education – while a learner-centred education is founded on the belief that all learners can learn and need to be given a chance to succeed. In the process of developing such a system, Mittler (2000) argues that teachers are entitled to adequate professional development and support.

From the above descriptions and definitions, it is clear that there are many groups of learners who stand to benefit from inclusive education, not only those with disabling conditions (Booth, 1999). In South Africa, these groups may include: learners from indigent family backgrounds who are often denied access to schools because their parents or guardians are unable to pay the required school fees; learners who, through lack of proficiency in the LoLT, are often graded as less intelligent than native speakers; street children; working children; and learners who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, among others.

In itself, this policy is not a guarantee that attitudes will change at the various levels of the education system. What it does do is set the agenda for reviewing current practice. It seeks to address exclusionary practices that continue to marginalise or prevent some learners from deriving maximum benefit from education. Accordingly, it encourages educators to take into account the various groups of learners who have been intentionally or unintentionally excluded from school activities on the basis of disability, gender, race, language (and culture), social class, among others, when planning lessons, tasks, and activities.

This study is premised on the notion that in order for teachers and schools to review their current practices with the intention of developing and implementing inclusive educational programmes that work, it is essential that they understand and embrace the philosophy of inclusion, its rationale and its purpose. In turn, their knowledge and acceptance of the policy, as well as their implementation of it, are likely to be influenced by how well they and other stakeholders at the different levels of the education system are informed about it. Their experience would be determined by the kinds of training they receive. To this effect, the study investigated teachers' understandings of inclusive education and the extent to which these reflected the above. Using the three schools as units of analysis, the study examines the nature and quality of the government's advocacy and information programme, as well as its diffusion of EWP6 to teachers and other stakeholders in the schools.

#### **4.2.2 School re-culturing**

The second conceptual framework used in the study was that of re-culturing (Doyle, 2002). In school contexts, re-culturing focuses on changing the ways in which teachers (and other stakeholders) think about schools and learners in need of support (Doyle, 2002). Re-culturing comes about as a result of schools changing their vision, committing to new sets of collective values (ibid), changing focus from schooling to learning, and becoming learning organisations where individual and collective learning is enhanced (Clarke, 2000). The emphasis is on a changed mind-set that seeks to improve on current practices. This is visible when teachers collectively decide what knowledge (from their past) is no longer useful and what needs to be learnt for the future (ibid).

The notion of re-culturing is used to understand if teachers, through their training for inclusive education, appreciate that there are old beliefs and assumptions that do not sit comfortably within the new paradigm; beliefs that gave meaning to their practices in the past, but which are not compatible with the social rights paradigm. This notion is useful in highlighting whether a paradigm shift is there or not in terms of teachers' perceptions of their role/function within the new system. It is also instrumental in understanding the role of communication within the provincial department, and how this enhances or interferes with the development of inclusive practices.

### **4.3 Theoretical frameworks**

Three theoretical frameworks informed the study. These were social constructivism (Donald et al, 1997; 2002), the theory of innovation diffusion (Rogers, 2003), and the systems theory (Donald et al, 1997; 2002; Sarason, 1990).

#### **4.3.1 Social Constructivism**

The study is located within the broad framework of social constructivism (Donald et al, 2002). As a theoretical construct, constructivism is based on the view that knowledge is constructed “in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998: 42). This framework emphasises how meanings and understandings grow out of social encounters (Vygotsky, 1962, cited in Atherton, 2005) or “human practices” (Crotty, op. cit: 42). As Donald et al (2002) argue, central to social constructivist thinking is the idea that knowledge is neither fixed nor given, but is constantly constructed in different social contexts. Crotty (op. cit.) concurs, adding that since knowledge and meaning are constructed, they only emerge when one consciously engages with them, interpreting the world. Furthermore, Donald et al add that the:

social construction of knowledge...involve(s) the construction and transmission of values, information, and ways of understanding through processes of social interaction (ibid:104).

Elaborating further, they highlight that as humans engage in activities and discussions that drive them to make sense of their experiences; they are active agents in the



construction of knowledge that improves their "understandings of their worlds" (Donald et al, 2002: 100).

The policy of inclusive education, like all other education policies, has implications for how education business is conducted in schools, districts, provincially and nationally. The school level is the most critical level of the education system as it is where policies are implemented and, regrettably, policies cannot be implemented by teachers who do not understand them. When new policies are introduced, teachers are affected both individually and collectively, as they define and interpret their experiences from a collective as well as an individual perspective. To facilitate their individual and collective learning and meaning making in terms of new policies, it is crucial that they are assisted to construct and re-construct the new knowledge in "different social contexts and at different times" (Donald et al, 2002: 103-4). Citing Vygotsky (1978) and Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), Donald et al (2002:100; 104) draw attention to the fact that mediation and scaffolding are important tools in the social construction of knowledge. As such, in this study, social constructivism is useful in understanding the ways in which teachers as learners engage with an innovation such as inclusion, and what processes they are assisted to go through to reach complete understanding.

#### **4.3.2 Innovation diffusion**

The second theoretical framework that informed this study is the theory of innovation diffusion (Rogers, 2003). This theory was used to investigate and understand how

information about EWP6 is disseminated throughout the system, particularly among teachers who are the intended implementers of the policy. The innovation diffusion theory concerns itself with how a new idea progresses from creation to use (Clarke, 1999). Rogers (2003) defines diffusion as a process of communicating a new idea to members of a system through definite channels over a period of time. Through communication, information is created and shared with the intention of reaching a common understanding of the innovation. He adds that communicating an innovation is accompanied by a degree of uncertainty because of its novelty, and that it has the potential to bring about social change.

Clarke (1999) identifies five stages through which an idea or innovation passes, namely, knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Knowledge involves exposure to the idea and reaching an understanding of how it functions; persuasion entails developing a positive attitude towards the innovation; decision occurs when one commits to adopting the innovation; implementation is the actual exercise of putting an innovation into practice; while confirmation is the stage where outcomes from implementation can reinforce the innovation. Furthermore, in diffusing an innovation, it is important to know its purpose (e.g. changing knowledge, attitudes and/or practices) as this would have an impact on planning and implementation strategies (Rogers & Scott, 1997). In our context, inclusive education is a new system that is challenging our old ways of conducting educational business. Therefore, interpersonal channels of communication are likely to be more suitable for forming and changing attitudes towards the innovation EWP6 (ibid).

In a similar vein, Rogers (2003) identifies two distinct stages in the innovation process: initiation and implementation. Initiation involves agenda setting and matching, while implementation entails redefinition, clarification, and routinising (please refer to **Appendix I** to see Rogers' diagrammatic representation of this process). According to Rogers, initiation refers to the stage during which the decision to adopt is taken. In systems such as the education system, this stage is only open to those with the authority to make such decisions. It is, in some ways, ironic that those who are expected to put the decision into practice (implementers) – in this case teachers – are unable to contribute to this important stage, as the adoption or rejection of ideas remains the prerogative of the national agency.

If the policy implementation process starts with the diffusion of the idea, then governments need to pay serious attention to how information on the innovation is diffused. A view promoted by Fullan (1992) is that implementation involves learning to do something new. As such, it involves change, a process of acquiring new knowledge. In other words, the essence of implementation is change in behaviour and beliefs. This necessitates training and re-training of personnel in the new knowledge, behaviour and beliefs, as well as reorientation to the roles and responsibilities required by the innovation. For example, in the context of implementing EWP6, teachers and teacher trainees need to be 'taught what inclusive education is, how to go about developing inclusive schools and classrooms, and what structures and resources are needed to support such a system of education. Furthermore, in-service teachers need to unlearn

the old, deficit-based ways of looking at educational difficulties and, instead, come to an understanding of the nature, rationale, and purpose of inclusion, as well as of the new skills they need to create welcoming schools and classrooms that support learning.

It is clear then that policy implementation is not a linear process comprising policy formulation at the top and systematic implementation at the grass-root level (Goacher, Evans, Welton, & Wedell, 1988). This complexity is attributed to the fact that those who implement policies interpret them within the framework of their practice. This means that there are likely to be differences in what the politicians intend and what is actually implemented by what Weatherley called the “street-level bureaucrats” (1979: 5), in this case, teachers in schools. Weatherley attributes this difference in outcomes to the fact that such street-level bureaucrats directly interact with the learners, where they are often expected to function optimally with limited organisational and personal resources. As a result, they end up devising means to rationalise their services, modify goals, assert priorities, and limit or redefine consumers of their service in an attempt to render a service. This latitude is made possible by the discretionary nature of their work (ibid).

It is for these reasons that Ouston (1998) concludes that in education, change differs from that in other organisations because it is usually imposed through education Acts and policies. She adds that although there is a struggle and lots of negotiation during the formulation stage (which is usually between top level bureaucrats, union officials and politicians), the final product is imposed on those who are expected to put it into action, usually teachers and schools (ibid). (The diagram, **Appendix I** shows the

different stages and phases of the innovation process that seem to have been followed in the case of EWP6). Hartshorne (1999) argues that it is common practice for states to use the contexts (political, social, and economic) in which education takes place to achieve those objectives they view as important. This is because the state and its officials have the power to control education, for example, on issues of access and the curriculum (ibid). However, the reality is that authority lies with teachers and schools, as they directly control and influence what goes on in classrooms. Therefore, to ensure that all stakeholders – particularly teachers – have an adequate understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of the innovation, there is a great need to include them early in the innovation process.

This study was, therefore, premised on the notion that education is never neutral, and cannot function in a vacuum. This means that the results of this study have to be understood within the social, political, and economic contexts in which schooling takes place. If teachers and schools retain some freedom to decide what goes on in the classroom, then it means that if they do not understand or buy into inclusion or any other innovation, their practices will not change. It also means that the three schools in this study are likely to be at different levels of awareness, depending on the nature and quality of information they have received on inclusive education, as well as opportunities they have had to discuss and debate what such a system means for them individually and collectively. All this points to the critical role played by innovation diffusion in the life of any innovation, as it determines whether the innovation is adopted or not.

The study is further premised on the notion that directives for change do not actually bring about change (Fullan, 1999). In public service systems such as education, where there is a high level of freedom and independence for the workers within organisations, it may also be impossible to standardise practice. Nevertheless, as Doyle (2002) observes, those leading the reform – in this case inclusion – still need to build commitment to it. That is why Weatherley (1979: 25) believes that an important aspect of introducing

complex and innovative special education reform is the capacity of the state education bureaucracy to plan, coordinate, mobilize support for, direct, monitor, and assess its implementation.

Mobilising support for an innovation involves making information available about the innovation, so that the change agents (teachers) understand what it is and what the benefits are.

Furthermore, this thesis is premised on the notion that the Ministry of Education has different subsystems (e.g. curriculum, examinations, among others) and levels (e.g. provincial, regional and district officials, school management, and teachers and parents), all equally contributing to the effective and efficient provision of education in the province. As such, the success of inclusive education depends on whether, in preparing the system for the implementation of the policy, these stakeholders and sectors participate equally at all stages of the diffusion of the innovation (Rogers, 2003). It also depends on whether they are given opportunities to critique, question, and challenge decisions taken at different levels. This is taken up again in **Chapter Seven**.

### **4.3.3 Systems theory**

A third framework that informed this study is the systems theory, which contends that in order to understand the whole, we need to examine the relationship between all the parts of the system (Donald et al, 1997; 2002), and that “those parts stand in diverse relationship to each other, and that between and among those parts are boundaries of varying strength and permeability” (Sarason, 1990:15). In a similar vein, the systems approach highlights relationships between the school, society, and the education system within which it operates (Burgess, 1986). In this context, schools are seen as open systems that get input from different related systems such as other schools, families of learners, regional office, and others. Thus, the systems theory assumes that all parts of the system are interrelated and interdependent, and therefore influence each other. To illustrate, the NCSNET and NCESS report promoted a systemic approach to difficulties in learning, claiming that barriers to learning could be located within the learner, centre of learning, education system, or within the general social, economic, and political contexts (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). In a school system, difficulties in learning could be caused by a learner's poor concentration level, inaccessibility of the library to wheelchair users, a poorly trained teaching force, or other exclusionary practices within the broader society.

Using Bronfenbrenner's contextual framework (1977, 1979, 1986), Donald et al (2002: 51-53) highlight the role played by different levels of a system in the process of development. Bronfenbrenner locates development within four systems, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem which interact with the

chronosystem. In this study, the social interactions and their influences on teacher and, to a lesser extent, school development for inclusive education take place within the school (microsystem), the district (mesosystem), the province (exosystem) and national (macrosystem). The interactions of these different levels of the education system were interrogated in relation to their influence on teacher development for inclusive education as well as in relation to the time frames given for the policy framework.

Another important principle of the systems theory that these authors highlight is that cause and effect relationships are not seen in linear fashion, but in cycles. This means that the interrelationship between the parts is such that an action in one part does not necessarily lead to an action in another part (ibid). For example, adopting an inclusive system of education by national decision-makers will not necessarily lead to altered practices in schools and classrooms. Thus, on one hand, changing practice requires much more than policy statements. As Doyle (2002) rightly observes, directives do not arrive with preparation and support to implement. In other words, the national and provincial levels have to find ways of influencing the district levels and schools before there can be visible change at school level. On the other hand, the different subsystems of the education system are interdependent and do influence each other. For example, the quality of training teachers receive for a new curriculum determines the quality of their practice in the new curriculum.

In addition to the interdependence of the subsystems within the education system, other parallel systems, such as those of health and the economy, also co-exist with it.



These systems do interact with each other and do, directly or indirectly, affect each other. In this light, Burgess (1986) suggests that the ways in which schools function are determined by the social, political, economic, and administrative forces at play. In South Africa, the democratic government is concerned with developing an inclusive society, where all people are equal before the law, as evidenced by the country's constitution and any other laws that uphold the human rights of all. It is natural, therefore that schools – as organisations that serve the aspirations of clients – should be structured and organised in an inclusive manner, if they are to socialise young people into citizens who strive for the inclusion of all.

If such an inclusive education is to succeed, there have to be systemic changes in other systems that interact with education. For example, the higher education system, the social system, and the economic system must also embrace inclusion, otherwise the ideal of developing an inclusive society will not materialise. If inclusion is not embraced by other systems, learners who are included in education will again be marginalised when they seek employment or attempt to study further. This interrelatedness of the different systems makes it critical that inter-sectorial policies agree with and complement each other, otherwise we would have incoherent and non-complementary policies that are impossible to implement.

This point is further illustrated by Grenot-Scheyer et al's (2001) observation that in countries already implementing inclusion, many educators and parents confront real issues such as limited financial resources, limited support, and inadequate training in

their attempts to provide quality inclusive schooling. Since those countries are much better resourced than we are, those experiences are sure to be more prevalent for both educators and parents in South Africa. For example, the rate of unemployment is very high and some communities are badly affected by this. This means that there are many learners who are affected by poverty on the home front and whose basic needs are not adequately met. Poverty has an impact on the ability of these learners' parents to contribute to school funds and to the provision of quality educational resources. Most importantly, it also has an impact on the affected learners' ability to take an active part in the learning process. If teachers and schools are not aware of the impact of poverty, they might dismiss some learners as being disinterested, or as incapable of learning.

The systems theory could, therefore, be used to study and highlight how other systems influence and affect education, but that is beyond the scope of this study. This study focuses on understanding how the subsystems within the education system interact in order to diffuse information to facilitate an understanding of inclusion. The focus is on the relationship between the various subsystems of the education system, namely, schools, support services, regional and provincial offices. These are examined in terms of how they interact and support each other in the learning process. The same scrutiny is applied to participating schools to investigate how the various subsystems thereof (specifically teachers, support staff, and management) interact to promote the development of welcoming teaching and learning environments. The systems theory is also used to understand how schools and teachers are developed and supported to develop new inclusive cultures. By using this theory as a lens through which to view

and understand the various factors that interact to support or impede the development of an inclusive education system, this thesis argues that if the various sub-systems are not communicating effectively, it would negatively impact on the innovations that are introduced.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

My observations and experiences as an educator in KwaZulu-Natal suggests that, five years after the release of the policy, many of the teachers I have come into contact with in my work and research, know very little about the policy and the system it supports. Furthermore, this lack of understanding tends to produce resistance and subversions to the policy at a school level. Through this study, I hoped to gain some understanding of how teachers in selected schools are experiencing the policy of inclusive education and its related training system. Specifically, I was interested in examining the processes that were utilised to inform schools and teachers about EWP6, and – in particular – how teachers are being prepared and trained for the implementation of inclusive education in their own schools and classrooms.

A number of key propositions about the diffusion of EWP6 and inclusive education to schools, and the experiences and responses of teachers to these in selected KwaZulu-Natal schools emerge, and are informed by the theoretical frameworks reviewed in this chapter. The propositions are linked to the research questions that informed the study, and might explain the poor understanding among teachers of EWP6 and inclusive education, which in turn might lead to poor implementation. These propositions are

tentative (Bassey, 1999) and are to be tested by the evidence from the study, as well as by further evidence beyond the scope of the present investigation.

The first research question in this study is: how do teachers understand, experience, and respond to the new policy of inclusion? To this effect, this thesis proposes that teachers in the selected schools have a limited understanding of EWP6 and inclusive education and – as such – tend to respond negatively to it and either do not implement it at all, or – if they do – their efforts are poorly executed. This assertion is based on the notion that teachers' knowledge and acceptance of the policy, as well as their implementation of it, is likely to be influenced by how well they and other stakeholders at the different levels of the education system are informed about it. In addition, their experience would be determined by the kinds of training they receive in relation to it.

The second research question is: what strategies are used to manage the diffusion of this innovation at district and school levels, and how do these strategies impact on the stakeholders' understandings, experiences, and response to the innovation? By using the theory of diffusion of innovation reviewed above, this thesis posits that the extent to which teachers – and other stakeholders at school – understand, interpret and embrace the policy of inclusion and its principle is dependent on the nature and quality of information they receive and, therefore, on the innovation diffusion process. The thesis is premised on the notion that directives for change do not actually bring about change. In public service systems, such as education, where there is a high level of freedom and independence for the workers within such organisations, it may also be impossible

to standardise practice. Thus, it is critical to mobilise support for an innovation, by making information available about the innovation so that the change agents (teachers) understand what it is, what the benefits are, and how to go about implementing it. The ways in which the state, through the district office, is managing the process was investigated in the study.

Additionally, the thesis is informed by the notion that the Ministry of Education has different subsystems (e.g. curriculum, examinations, governance) or levels (e.g. provincial, regional and district officials, school management and teachers as well as parents), all equally contributing to the effective and efficient provision of education in the province. As such, the success of inclusive education and its implementation depends on whether, in preparing the system for the implementation of the policy, these stakeholders and sectors participate equally at all stages of the diffusion of the innovation (Rogers, 2003), from information to training through to implementation. The study examined the nature and extent of teachers' participation in the first phase of implementation of EWP6: the diffusion or information dissemination stage.

Moreover, the thesis is premised on the notion that education is never neutral and cannot function in a vacuum. Instead, schooling takes place in different social, political, and economic contexts. It is for this reason that the study examined the role of the school context in the diffusion of the innovation (EWP6) and the ways in which teachers understand, interpret, and assess their preparedness for it.

The third research question is: what support is available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to embrace the principles enshrined in the new system of education, and to implement the policy in their schools? This thesis posits that the nature and quality of the teachers' and other stakeholders' experiences would be greatly influenced by both the nature and quality of support available to them within schools and within districts. This means that, if teachers have adequate opportunities to debate what inclusion is and why it is necessary, it is more likely that they will develop a common understanding of its principles and possibly accept the policy and what it represents. Their implementation efforts and strategies would focus on a common goal. Furthermore, the success of the policy in schools will depend on the quality and kinds of training and support teachers receive in preparation for implementing the policy.

The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology used to address the research questions identified above.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Research design and methodology

*Research is a systematic way of asking questions, a systematic method of inquiry. The purpose of research is to obtain knowledge or information that pertains to some question. The question may be very simple ....or it may be more complex...Research is a method that attempts to undertake this task in a systematic fashion to obtain objective and unbiased information (Drew, Hardman & Weaver Hart, 1996:2).*

### 5.1 Introduction

South Africa celebrated 10 years of democracy in 2004, which was a very important political milestone. Its importance lies in the fact that much progress has been made in addressing the injustices and inequalities of the past. However, a great deal still remains to be done before all citizens can claim to be receiving quality education. For example, the launch of the National Quality Education Development and Upliftment Programme for Public Schools (Naidu & Govender, 2005) is adequate evidence that many children are still disadvantaged and being failed by the current system of education. This programme, the authors claim, is aimed at improving the quality of learning in around 20 000 of the poorest schools catering for over 7, 5 million learners. If successfully implemented, the programme will reinforce the government's plans to create a barrier-free system of education through the adoption of an inclusive system of education and training.

In this regard, EWP6 (Department of Education, 2001) was adopted as a framework for creating an inclusive education system in South African schools. As highlighted in the earlier chapters, it came about as a result of past discrimination and inequalities in the provision of education, and is part of the government's strategy to develop a democratic society. This policy concluded the work commissioned to the NCSNET and NCESS, which was to examine the organisation and provision of special needs education and support services. By adopting the policy of inclusion, the government is seeking to remove these barriers, to redress past inequalities and to provide all learners with quality education. This policy, like all emerging policies and legislation that have to be in line with the country's Constitution, upholds the principles of equality and social justice. It also seeks to create a cost effective, unitary, and integrated system of education in which all learners are valued and all stakeholders are encouraged to participate (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

Manganyi (2001) acknowledges that in the past, as a result of inadequate human and financial resources, educational institutions remained ineffectual in realising policy objectives. In a way, this admission provides an explanation for Welton's (2001) assertion that at grass-roots level, teachers are familiar with the terminology or discourse of transformation, but lack practical understanding of what it actually means, and how to implement it. This assertion has serious implications for a systemic reform like inclusive education. A systemic reform is a change process that is planned to span "an extended period of time and takes into account all levels of the organization" (Guskey, 2000: 20). Such a reform requires enormous amounts of financial backing



because all school-based and office-based personnel will need to be retrained to ensure that learning takes place at both individual and organisational levels, the latter encouraging and supporting the former (ibid). That is why indications of systemic difficulties in managing the change process in the new South Africa place the success of this policy at risk.

At this stage, a brief history of KwaZulu-Natal needs to be tabled so that the political context within which the research study took place is delineated. Since 1994, the African National Congress (hereafter referred to as ANC) has been in power nationally, but each province has had its own locally elected administration. KwaZulu-Natal has been the only province governed by the Inkatha Freedom Party (hereafter referred to as IFP) until the April 2004 elections, when the ANC gained a majority. During apartheid, there was a great deal of animosity between these two organisations. For the education system, this presented a set of challenges and contradictions. On one hand, education policies are nationally initiated and adopted. On the other, implementation has to be facilitated and supported by the provinces (de Clercq, 2001).

Although provinces could develop their own policies, in relation to national ones, they could not develop and adopt opposing policies or policies that contravened the constitution. However, they could plead lack of capacity to implement or push other agendas, thereby ensuring that the realisation of national goals was delayed, if not thwarted. This means that politics could easily be used to interfere with, or sabotage, national goals. In addition, in the event that political power changes hands, most of the

top-level bureaucrats remain in their positions and, since their allegiance is with the defeated party, one wonders how enthusiastic they are to implement reforms initiated by a rival party.

It was within this context that the study was conducted. However, the focus of the study was not on the political will to implement inclusion, but on how teachers are experiencing and developing an understanding of this policy, particularly within the context of how policy information is being disseminated to various subsystems of the education system. Specifically, the focus is on how the innovation (inclusion) is being disseminated to teachers; the ways in which this dissemination strategy is influencing the teachers' understandings of inclusive education; and whether this group perceives the training they are receiving as sufficient for changing attitudes, knowledge, and practice in the system in general, and schools, in particular. To explore this phenomenon, the following research questions were identified:

- 1 What are the teachers' understandings of the new policy of inclusion?
- 2 What strategies are being used to manage the diffusion of this innovation at district and school levels?
- 3 What support is available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to shift from the old system of education to the new one?

When the study began in 2003, it became necessary to establish what was actually happening around the implementation of inclusive education and training. For this

reason, I conducted a pilot study to check the feasibility of my design (Robson, 2002) and to familiarise myself with the actual context within which the study was to take place.

## 5.2 The pilot study

A qualitative case study design was adopted for the whole study. This design uses several methods to collect data, the most common being observations, interviews, and the analysis of documents or records (Robson, 1993). A miniature component of the main study was designed to investigate teachers' perceptions and experiences of inclusive education. Since this aspect of the project was a very small-scale study, an equally small pilot sample (**Table 2**) was constituted, consisting of three teachers and two principals drawn from four primary schools.

Teachers	Principals	Officials
3	2	2

**Table 2: Pilot sample**

One principal was from Umlazi and the other one was from a suburb of Durban. Two of the teachers were from Clairwood and the other one was from another school in a suburb of Durban. These schools were administered from two districts, Isipingo and Shelley Beach. In addition, two members of the district support services in the Psychological Guidance and Special Education Services (hereafter referred to as PGSES) unit in the Isipingo and Shelley Beach district were included as respondents.

The participants of the pilot study and their districts were not part of the main project sample.

The pilot study focused on the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the new policy of inclusion?
  - a. Are teachers aware of the new policy promoted by EWP6?
  - b. What levels of support are available to teachers (and schools) from the districts?
2. What strategies are used to manage this change in policy (and expected change in practice)?
  - a. What is the current stage of implementation in each school (and district)?
  - b. How are teachers (and schools) assisted to shift from the old system of education to the new one?

Informal interviews were the only data collection method used during the pilot programme. Notes were taken during all the interviews, but there were no recordings. This was in line with Robson's suggestion that taping informal interviews may not be suitable because it may be intrusive (2002: 289). Interviews were selected for their flexibility in terms of making clarifications and follow-ups (ibid). Teachers' interviews lasted for 20 minutes and the principals' lasted for 40 minutes. The PGSES officials were interviewed together and theirs lasted for an hour. Interview questions were used as a framework for analysis. The results of the pilot yielded preliminary data that was

very useful in the development of the research instruments, and the refinement of the research focus and process, in the main study of this thesis. The results also informed the data collection methods used in the main study.

### **5.2.1 Findings from the pilot study<sup>4</sup>**

Findings from the pilot study indicated that not all schools had received a copy of the policy document, EWP6, this, two years since the policy document was released. To illustrate, the principal of St Andrews Primary (Anderson) had received a copy of the policy document, whereas the Phumelela Primary principal (Fuze) had not. More importantly, all three teachers (Bubbles, Goodies, and Woolworths) did not know if their schools had received copies or not. In terms of teachers' knowledge or awareness of policy, all three teachers were aware of the new policy, but obviously not through dissemination efforts by their schools or the districts, but through further studies that they were undertaking at various higher education institutions. However, there was awareness of the policy at the higher levels of the education system. For example, the PGSES' personnel (both trainee psychologists) were aware of the policy and demonstrated a good understanding of its contents and objectives.

By analysing the data collected from the pilot study, I was mindful of the weakness of using interview data alone, in that the reliability and validity of the accounts provided could not be verified (Robson, 2002). However, the pilot provided an opportunity to obtain a general indication of the state of affairs in relation to the progress made in the

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities and that of their schools/districts.

dissemination and implementation of this policy. It was also useful in sharpening the focus of the main study.

Four broad themes emerged from the study.

#### **5.2.1.1 Understandings of the policy**

As stated above, all three teachers in the pilot were not aware of the existence of the policy in their own schools, but had heard of it from their own studies at the various Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at which they were enrolled for further study. Even then, there was some evidence of a limited understanding of the policy and its objectives. For example, Woolworths (from a private school in Durban) had no clear understanding of the policy as she had not read the policy document, nor had she attended any meeting or workshop where it was discussed. But she was quite adamant that “it has set alarm bells in my mind”. The other teachers, Bubbles and Goodies (from Clairwood School), knew what the policy was about, as they had attended a graduate course where it was part of the curriculum. Fuze, the Phumelela School principal in Umlazi, was adamant that she had received a copy of SASA (Department of Education, 1996), but not EWP6. Moreover, she had not heard of inclusion and had no idea what it was about. On the other hand, Anderson, the principal of St Andrews School in Durban, had received both documents and had been to a workshop where EWP6 was discussed, but still did not have a clear understanding of what the policy is about.

There were similarities between Anderson's perceptions of inclusion and those of Woolworth's (from St Andrews and Durban Private School respectively). They both agreed with the principle of inclusion, but doubted that it could be implemented in the South African context. Their understanding of special needs reflected their subscription to the medical discourse, which places too much emphasis on learner deficits, rather than on their abilities and educational needs (Fulcher, 1989). This discourse is sometimes referred to as the deficit model (Department of Education, 1997) because it sees only the characteristics of learners (e.g. disability, poor, slow) as the source of difficulties in learning, and totally ignores the impact of the context in which learning takes place. This is contrary to the agenda of the new policy, which acknowledges and celebrates learner differences, while responding to individual learning needs (Department of Education, 2001). One explanation for this might lie in the fact that both these teachers are white and that their study and teaching backgrounds are characterised by abundant school resources, including specialists who were readily available to take care of those learners who were struggling with the curriculum. When they think of inclusion, it is possible that that experiential framework informs them.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the model of specialist support services for only a few schools and learners goes against the grain of democracy and equity. It is a practice that can no longer be encouraged or supported. In the apartheid era, the government could afford to support such services, as they were reserved for a small section of the population – the white minority. In KwaZulu-Natal non-white communities, special schools were built and run by charity organisations until the late '80s when the

Department of Education and Culture came on board. This framework cannot be maintained, as it entrenches the belief that only a few learners need to be supported in their learning, and that these are commonly the learners with visible physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. This view obviously neglects the fact that a huge section of the learner population is experiencing barriers to learning as a result of contextual, health, and other factors, and that these learners are also struggling for access to and success within the education system. In a democracy, everybody is guaranteed access to quality education, and inclusive education forces us to find ways of ensuring that all schools, urban or rural, provide quality education with support readily available to those who need it.

#### **5. 2.1.2 Perceived implementation challenges**

All three teachers in the study anticipated that there would be some implementation challenges. For example, Woolworths could not imagine how it would work in her school or other schools:

*I agree with the principle, but how can I cope with a child who has special needs in my class of 25? I would not be able to give her the attention she deserves.*

Generally, she thought class size, shortage of resources, and shortage of teachers would make it difficult to implement inclusion. She did acknowledge that her school was actually better off than most public schools that tend to have fewer resources, inadequate staff quotas, and unqualified teachers. Schools such as these, she reasoned, were already fighting an uphill battle trying to provide quality education for all their learners. By acknowledging that poorly resourced schools would struggle more to



make inclusion a reality, she realised that part of the success of inclusion lay in the availability of basic resources. A private school such as hers can always choose to raise its fees to get the required resources, but other schools cannot as they serve poorer segments of society.

Bubbles and Goodies also felt that their school was not ready to implement inclusive education. Their assessment was based on an in-depth understanding of the policy, gained through their studies. They were able to think about the existing culture as well as structures. For example, their concern was not centered on what resources they needed to get before being able to implement inclusion. Instead, they felt that the culture of their school did not promote collaboration, because they had not yet reached a stage where readily available human resources were recognised and optimally utilised. For example, they both felt that first-language learners and non-English-speaking learners who were competent in the LoLT could be encouraged to support those learners who had difficulties in accessing the curriculum (peer tutoring), and this was not happening. These learners were not getting much support from teachers either, as most of them did not speak the dominant vernacular. They also felt that teachers, who through their post-graduate studies had gained new insights in the field, could share what they had learnt with staff. But it turns out that they were not encouraged to do so. In addition, they expressed concern about the polarisation of staff at this school. This was a practice that they thought would hamper the achievement of unity of purpose, which they knew to be crucial in the development of inclusive schools. To highlight this issue, Bubbles commented:

*We cannot offer to share our new knowledge because there are strong cliques. A good suggestion can be turned down simply because it came from the wrong person.*

Based on these limitations, they concluded that their school was not ready for inclusion since the prevailing culture would work against the development of an inclusive system. It is unfortunate that some learners are exposed to such an environment, as it is not conducive to the development of a culture of learning (nor that of teaching for that matter), and certainly runs counter to the principles and objectives of inclusive education. Similarly, such teaching and learning contexts highlight the need to develop more supportive, learner-centred practices, which is the goal of inclusive education. In inclusive settings, teachers are encouraged to collaborate on tasks and to support each other as they unlearn practices that do not take them forward, and learn new ones to develop their practice (Clarke, 2000).

This collaboration and support did not take place at St Andrews School either because Anderson, who had received a copy of the policy document and had even attended a briefing workshop, did not share this new information with his staff. Maybe it was for the better since he seemed to have totally misunderstood the policy's intentions. He expressed concern that South Africa was not rich like European countries and, therefore, felt that such a policy would not be easy to implement, adding that "we cannot afford to adopt everything they [1<sup>st</sup> world countries] do". The country's economy, he felt, would be a limitation insofar as securing resources was concerned. As far as he was concerned, the main stumbling block to implementing inclusion would be access difficulties, both physical and curriculum:

*I agree with the principle of inclusion, but I have no ramps and there are no specially trained teachers on my staff to take care of children with special needs.*

It was evident that he had not had the opportunity to read the policy document, and that the workshop he attended had not helped him understand what this policy is trying to achieve. The fact that his understanding of inclusive education was limited to ramps and specialist teachers, suggested that the workshop had not been successful in clarifying what the policy statement is. In addition, the office that distributed this document did not make follow-ups to check if schools understood what it was about. It is possible that the participants were asked to read it in their schools, which Anderson did not do, or that for some whole policy documents are too daunting to read on their own. Maybe there should have been a follow-up briefing meeting where the document was explained again, this might have been a useful strategy to ensure that correct information is disseminated to introduce the policy.

Fuze, the principal from Phumelela School had received a copy of SASA, but not EWP 6. However, this was not discussed with staff. On being briefed about what the policy on inclusive education is about, she indicated that her school faced more pressing challenges that would militate against adopting an inclusive approach to education. She pointed out that the school buildings were in desperate need of repair, that there was a shortage of teaching space and resources, and that the teacher-pupil ratio was rather high for a primary school (1:50 instead of 1:40). It was clear that at Phumelela School, like in the other three schools in the pilot, there were numerous systemic

barriers to learning and development, which needed urgent attention if the process of developing an inclusive system of education and training was to move smoothly.

The Support Services staff (Simba and Pumba), although stationed in different districts, anticipated more or less the same challenges. The biggest one, according to them, was that they always acted from provincial directives. Staff in these units could not take full responsibility for their work as the provincial office often decided what the focus of their work should be. Sometimes these directives pushed inclusion to the margins, as one of them indicated:

*We are busy with school evaluations right now. (Simba)*

Even the staff development programmes that they implemented seemed to be planned at the top management level:

*There is no needs analysis to see what the schools' concerns and needs are, we just do what we are told to do. (Simba)*

They also felt that restructuring, which had been going on for some time, had resulted in staff demoralisation. One of them defined the prevailing spirit in no uncertain terms:

*Most of my colleagues have been moved around so much, no one knows where they will be in two months. It's a strange way of working. (Pumba)*

Pumba was also concerned that there had been very little, or no, shift both in thinking and in practice, within the support unit where she was based;

*You won't believe it but we are still concerned with testing children that are identified as having special needs. (Pumba)*

### **5.2.1.3 Information dissemination**

In all four schools in the pilot study, the policy of inclusive education and training had not been discussed with staff. The Phumelela principal had not received EWP6 but had received the SASA. This Act introduces significant changes in how education is to be organised. Nevertheless, it was not discussed with staff. Instead, HoDs were instructed to discuss it with their departments and the principal was aware that none of the HoDs had done so, yet nothing was done to correct it. Anderson, from the St Andrews School, had in fact given EWP6 to the special-class teachers who “are the only ones who deal with learners with special needs”, again, indicating a poor understanding of the policy of inclusion.

Data obtained from the pilot study strongly suggests that information does not flow freely between the various levels of the education system. Vital information does not reach all the schools and, once it gets there, principals do not always pass it on to the teachers and other stakeholders in the schools. Also, there are no follow-ups to see if principals need support in disseminating the new information. In addition, there seems to be a hint of reluctance from principals to have meaningful discussion on policy documents. EWP6 and SASA are important documents that should encourage a change in practice, or at least start a dialogue among educators and other stakeholders, but they cannot accomplish this if they are not circulated. As a result, teachers were not aware of the reforms proposed by these documents, and no dialogue ensued. One principal justified this practice by stating that:

*There is too much information in this document (SASA); most of it irrelevant for primary schools. In any case if there is something important to take note of, the department will call us and bring it to our attention. (Fuze, Phumelela principal)*

Although one can appreciate that the Phumelela School was struggling with challenges such as overcrowding and dilapidated buildings – challenges that are common to schools in poorer areas – this statement reflects a lack of vision and strategy, as well as a measure of over-dependence on senior officials.

With regard to the Clairwood School principal, the two teachers could not say if he had received a copy of EWP6 or not, but it was clear that he had heard about inclusive education. Whether this was through attending a meeting or workshop where it was on the agenda or reading a copy of the document, was not clear. He reportedly told staff in passing that “you must get ready to implement this inclusive education”, which suggests that he knew staff needed to be informed of this initiative. Otherwise, how would he have known about it? He might, however, have felt that he did not have adequate information to share. One can only speculate that he did not understand it well enough to discuss it with his staff. Whatever the case may be his comment leaves one wondering what it is he expected his teachers to do in preparation for implementing something they knew nothing of.

#### **5.2.1.4 Support available to schools**

A serious problem identified at district level was that various directorates seemed to have different priorities. While the top education echelons were introducing a major reform in the form of inclusive education, other directorates were introducing their own

policies and reforms, such as curriculum reforms, and teacher evaluations among others. It is possible that these priorities (inclusion, evaluations, and restructuring) are linked, but the interviewees did not think so. These different priorities at the top signify a lack of communication and collaboration, the very attributes the system is looking for at a school level to successfully implement inclusive education. If inclusion is a systemic reform, the development of an inclusive system of education should not be seen as the responsibility of the PGSES unit only. Instead, all Directorates should concern themselves with this task so that all of them can develop a sound understanding of this system of education, and develop strategies to support all teachers to sustain learning within their areas.

I assumed that part of short-term goals targeted to take place from 2001 to 2003 would be that all Directorates would concern themselves with the development of their units along the lines of inclusive education, so that they are able to contribute to the pilot programme/s, and later to the full implementation process after all levels have been developed [probably the long-term goal (2009-2021)]. One of the principles of inclusive education is that *all* children *can* learn and that they *all* need support. What is needed are ways of responding to this in an integrated manner that will enable schools to provide a supportive environment for all learners. To illustrate, the Curriculum Directorate might develop strategies to support teachers in differentiating the curriculum, and the Examinations Directorate might develop strategies to support teachers in matters of assessment. Unless this happens, the introduction of inclusive education will be fragmented and the reform will not take root in the system as a whole.

The PGSES units, both provincially and nationally, are meant to be the backbone of inclusion – a shoulder for the whole system to lean on – especially in the initial stages of dissemination and implementation, when people are finding their way. However, they cannot be expected to do everything. Emerging evidence suggested that the units were either overstretched or lacked guidance. In the context of inclusion, staff from these support units should be dealing directly with schools responding to contextual needs and facilitating the development of school-based support teams. That is the only way they can become familiar with the challenges that schools face, and work towards addressing them. If the culture of work is such that they are told from the top what to do, when, and how to do it, as seemed to be happening at the time of the pilot study, it is difficult to imagine how schools will be supported, if at all.

It was also evident that changing practice was not easy, even in the face of mandates (Fullan, 1999). At the time of the pilot study, the PGSES units were reportedly continuing with individual learner testing, contrary to the report of the NCSNET and the NCESS (Department of Education, 1997) and EWP6 (Department of Education, 2001), which clearly indicate that priority should be given to identifying barriers to learning and participation within schools and communities, instead of identifying learners who experience learning difficulties. And this occurred two years after the policy statement was issued! In addition, some of the people redeployed to these units have been moved from one position to another, some with no training for what they were expected to do. It is no wonder that they were reportedly demoralised. It must be very difficult to



support others when your morale is low and you are de-motivated yourself. Furthermore, with no training in what they are expected to do, the quality of support they will be able to provide to schools and teachers remains questionable. It is possible that the pilot study was conducted in the very early days before this unit reorganised itself for the new policy. However, at that time, Simba's observation that "the centre cannot hold" sounded very appropriate. It also painted a gloomy picture about the future of inclusive education.

In the policy document, it is clearly stated that:

Classroom educators will be our primary resource for achieving our goal of inclusive education and training system. This means that educators will need to improve their skills and knowledge, and develop new ones. Staff development at the school and district level will be critical to putting in place successful integrated educational practices. Ongoing assessment of educator needs through our development appraisal, followed by structured programmes to meet these needs, will make a critical contribution to inclusion (Department of Education, 2001:18).

Although the policy statement is clear about which development and skills teachers will need in order to implement inclusion, findings from this pilot study indicated that this is not yet being reflected in the experiences of school- and support-service personnel. If the government's long-term goal is to have developed a fully inclusive system by 2021, surely raising awareness and capacity building need to be some of the short- to medium-term goals implemented in order to realise the long-term objective (Department of Education 2001a: 45). Planning such a major reform while staff lacks the necessary knowledge and skills will render this or any other policy worthless.

## 5. 2.2 Preliminary conclusions

Although I had only worked with a small sample, I realised that it is not easy to implement reforms in education. Fullan (1993) cites two reasons why education reform fails. The first one is the complexity of problems and the difficulty in alleviating them. The second is the intricacy of developing a culture of collaboration among educators. The exploratory study suggested both, even though it was early in the dissemination and implementation of EWP6. What was clear though was that none of the four pilot schools was getting ready to implement an inclusive education and training system, and support services were also not preparing to support any endeavours in this regard.

From the analysis of the findings of the pilot study, three critical issues seemed to stand out. First, there appeared to be no strategy in place to disseminate information on EWP6 within the province. Developing an inclusive education and training system is a complex systemic reform, and innovation diffusion is an important aspect of the implementation process. Some of the participants knew about inclusion, even though there were differences in their understanding of this type of education as well in their sources of this information.

Second, information did not seem to circulate effectively between and within the various subsystems of the education system. Only one of the five school-based personnel (two principals and three teachers) had heard about the policy through official means. One principal had not heard of, nor received this document, even though this was an official

document containing important information. The other principal who had seen it, thought it should be shared with the special class teachers instead of the whole staff.

Last, the PGSES units did not seem to have the power or the mandate to act. If these units continue to receive orders from upper management regarding when and how to do things, their capacity to support the development of this system is unlikely to improve. In addition, if this Directorate is to successfully facilitate the development of a new system, it is necessary that all staff are fully trained in the demands of their new role. In particular, those who had been redeployed to these units due to restructuring also need to be retrained and re-skilled so that they can have confidence in what they are doing, and be in a position to provide quality support to the schools and teachers, during the development of inclusive practice.

### **5.3 Towards a new direction for the investigation**

The pilot study yielded some very useful information, the most important being the exposure of delays and difficulties in the implementation process, which was the original focus of the thesis. For this reason, the focus of the study shifted slightly from the whole system (provincial, district, and school) to the school level. This shift was necessitated by the fact that, first, the findings illustrated that the dissemination of the policy, including the distribution of hard copies of EWP6 to schools, was not evenly occurring across all schools, and that – as a result – stakeholders at school level were either poorly informed or totally uninformed about the policy. Thus, by investigating the diffusion of the inclusion policy, it became necessary to establish the manner in which

schools were getting information and training on this innovation. Even though the districts and the province were no longer the focus of the study, it was still necessary to establish the level of support they gave to schools, because schools are the critical players in the implementation process. I also anticipated that I would be able to deduce what influences the districts and provinces would have from what was said and what occurred in the school contexts.

As such, the main study for this thesis focused on the following:

- Establishing educators' awareness and understanding of the new policy of inclusion
- Analysing the strategies used to facilitate the diffusion of this innovation at school level
- Establishing the types of support (resources and training) available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to make the necessary shift to the new system.

As reported in **Chapter Four**, there were five conceptual and theoretical frameworks that framed the study and adequately addressed the research questions. In order to collect and interpret data, the study draws on two conceptual frameworks: the philosophy of inclusion (Engelbrecht, 1999; Mittler, 2000) and re-culturing (Clarke, 2000; Doyle, 2002), as well as on the three theoretical perspectives: systems theory (Donald et al, 1997; 2002), the theory of innovation diffusion (Rogers, 2003), and the theory of social constructivism (Donald, et al, 2002; Atherton, 2005). This triangulation of theory has influenced the choice of the study's research design and data collection

methods. First, in order to understand the rationale and discourses around the inclusion of all learners in the learning process, and the adoption of EWP6 in the country's education system, the concept of inclusion was used. To understand how EWP6 and the system of inclusive education in the South African context is understood and envisaged, the concept of re-culturing and the theory of social constructivism were used. To this effect, questionnaires and interviews were used to investigate teachers' and principals' understandings of what inclusive education is.

Second, to understand the context in which EWP6 is being diffused and implemented – using the systems theory – this study looked at schools from two perspectives: as complete systems with their own contexts, and then as sub-systems within a wider context (Donald et al, 2002) of districts and provincial and national systems. Third, to investigate the strategies that are used to manage the diffusion of this innovation at district and school levels, the theory of innovation diffusion (Rogers, 2003), was used. This theory highlights how, in good times, a new idea that has been adopted at senior level is passed on to the specific constituency for implementation (ibid).

Thus, the research questions that informed the main study in this project were:

- How do the teachers understand and experience EWP6 and inclusive education?
- What strategies are used to disseminate information about, and manage the diffusion of, EWP6 and inclusive education in the province, in general, and in the district in which the three schools are located, in particular? In what ways do these

dissemination strategies impact on the teachers' understandings and experiences of the innovation?

- What support is available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to understand, embrace, and ultimately implement the new system of education?

The sections below focus on the research process and describe the research design and methodology used to address the research questions listed above.

### **5.3.1 Negotiating access to the research sites**

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the office of the Provincial Director of Research (see **Appendix A**). The standard permit letter from this office clearly states that schools are not obliged to take part in research projects that are not initiatives of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Therefore, access to all the schools had to be negotiated through the principals. Once the principals understood what the study was about, they agreed to “sell” the idea to their staff. It was interesting to note that each one used a different strategy to do so. These will be discussed later in **Section 5.3.3**. The responsible districts were also informed of the study as their schools were taking part.

Once the principals – as gatekeepers – had granted permission, teachers were approached to take part in the study. Teachers, like all research participants, cannot be coerced to take part in research studies, except – maybe – those commissioned and sanctioned by the government department. Although the principals acted as

gatekeepers, the teachers' consent in each school was renegotiated at different stages of the study, as the need arose (Hornby-Smith, 1993). According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) and Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), an important part of gaining access in qualitative research is disclosing what the research study entails. They emphasise that research participants are collaborators who assist us in our endeavours to understand them and their situation. This sentiment is shared by Hornby-Smith (1993) and Struwig and Stead (2001) who emphasise that the researcher has an obligation to explain what the research study entails, its purpose, and how the information obtained will be disseminated (in terms that are meaningful to the prospective participants), before they can knowledgeably agree to take part. Therefore, to ensure that when teachers gave their consent they were fully conversant with what the study was about, the intention of the study was disclosed. In this way, they agreed to take part with a full understanding of the research project and the demands that taking part would make on them. This was repeated at different stages as different types of data were collected.

All participants were assured that their own and their schools' identities would be treated as confidential throughout the study. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants in the research notes, transcripts, and in this report. However, in order to get permission from the Department of Education, the schools' identities had to be divulged as the permission document had to specify the names of schools I was allowed to work with. This is the only document where the confidentiality clause is compromised, but, the copy attached hereto does not have the names of the schools.

This is to ensure that it is not possible for those reading this thesis to identify the schools involved. The same was done to protect the identities of the participating districts and their officials, but this was not possible for the provincial official as she is the only person in that position. However, the provincial respondent was informed of this and still consented to take part. In addition, the University of KwaZulu-Natal research office requires all affiliated researchers to satisfy ethical requirements before an ethical clearance certificate is issued (see **Appendix B**).

### **5.3.2 Research design and methodology**

A qualitative case study design was selected for the study. Robson defines a case study as a research strategy that involves an “empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (2002:178). Similarly, De Vaus describes a case as “the ‘object’ of study” (2001: 220), which can be a person, event, a decision or organisation about which we gather information, in an attempt to come to an understanding based on the context in which it exists. In this case, the schools were the object of study, in which I was attempting to understand the ways in which EWP6 was being disseminated and diffused to teachers at the school level, and the ways in which the different contexts in which this was happening impacted on the process. The main features of a case study are its depth, intense analysis and description of the case (Verma & Mallick, 1999). This approach was favoured because of its suitability “in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated” (Yin, 2003:7).



In education, a case study design is used to gain an “in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1988: xii), in this case the teachers. In these instances, the emphasis is on process, context, and discovery, rather than on outcomes, specific variables, or confirmation (ibid). It is a research approach that is concerned with the dynamics involved between events and situations. It involves extensive data collection on the group under study, and the methods are determined by the issue explored (Verma & Mallick, 1999). It was for this reason that the case study was particularly useful in understanding how the innovation was communicated through the various subsystems of the education system, and how – in the various school contexts – it was received, interpreted, and understood by teachers and possibly other stakeholders.

According to Neuman (2003), research projects such as this one are said to be exploratory, seeking to address the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions. However, from an analysis of these questions, it is possible to further investigate the ‘why’ and ‘what if’ questions. These might lead to a deeper understanding of the issues and processes involved in the diffusion of the innovation, and the possible implications for the implementation of the policy. In exploratory case studies, tight pre-structuring is not possible because of the nature of the investigation; as one is trying to establish what is happening in the new situation, one has little guidance as to what to look for (ibid). Robson (2002) views this flexibility as one of the case study’s greatest strengths. The enquiry focused on a situation about which little was understood, with the intention of establishing what was happening. This was done by asking questions and looking for

new insights. The main thrust of this case study was to find out how information on the policy was being relayed to schools. Next, it looked at how the schools were being supported and developed to prepare for the implementation of this policy. Implicit within these foci was a need to understand how, based on the diffusion process, the policy was then received and understood, and how it might ultimately be implemented in the schools.

The research methodology used was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research describes social phenomena using terms that “preserve the organisation, interpretations, and meaning of phenomena as constructed by the individuals involved” (Peck & Furman, 1992: 2). The main objective of engaging in qualitative research was to understand the meaning of an experience (Merriam, 1988), in this case, the introduction of a new educational policy. The assumption was that – depending on a specific context, the individuals and groups involved – there would be many realities constructed through individual interactions, perceptions, and experiences, which all need to be interpreted (ibid).

The suitability of a qualitative case study design made it the best choice for this research study. The qualitative case study is a methodology that is suitable for investigating and addressing critical problems of practice, with the aim of improving practice (Merriam, 1988). As qualitative research seeks to understand the context from the perspective of those studied, it has the potential to make significant contributions to practice and knowledge of education (ibid). Through qualitative research, the schools’

situation can be assessed. Contextual conditions of school practice can also be exposed, including cultural values, teacher beliefs and expectations, as well as organisational structures and processes (ibid).

Another reason qualitative methodology was favoured was its premise that human actions and institutions are “social constructions rather than the product of external factors which mould people in ways that can be predicted” (Vulliamy, Lewin & Stephens, 1990:8). Other reasons this methodology was favoured are those described by Miles and Huberman (1994:10), which include: its strength; the fact that it concentrates on naturally occurring events; that it is collected over a period of time close to where the action takes place; and that it is rich and holistic. This allowed me to view each school as a context whose culture is not only shaped by externally imposed agendas, but also by stakeholders (teachers, learners, and parents). I, therefore, looked for signs that each school was engaging with the policy information in some way. I expected each school's engagement to differ, according to their internal dynamics, resources, and available opportunities, which would affect their ability to debate the policy statement. I also wanted to examine the extent to which the schools interacted with their district/s, as this policy is new territory for them. I assumed schools would require a lot of support and guidance in moving towards understanding what the policy is about, and what will be expected of them during the implementation phase.

Since neither the selected case study sites nor the investigated phenomena were unique, the findings did not indicate any significant differences among them. The findings in the next chapter are, therefore, integrated and aggregated across the three

sites, rather than being presented as separate cases. Also, it is for these reasons that the findings will be useful to a wider audience as they can be related to other sites (Johnson, 1994). The study highlights the value of innovation diffusion as part of the policy implementation process, and the findings might be of great use to departmental officials in planning for future innovations.

To ensure that the data gathered was rich and reliable, a variety of methods were used: self-completion questionnaires for teachers; interviews with principals and one provincial official; focus-group interviews with teachers; participant observations in schools, and document analysis. In addition, there was an audit of school resources completed by the principals, observation of workshops around inclusion organised by one of the districts, as well as numerous recordings of incidental conversations. These are discussed later in this chapter.

### **5.3.3 The research sites**

The study was undertaken in the Greyville and Shelly Beach districts in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. A purposive sample of three primary schools from the two selected districts was identified for the study. A purposive sample is made up of typical cases that the researcher is interested in (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Robson, 2002). The selected schools were included to ensure that a range of school settings was represented (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Robson argues that non-probability samples are useful in cases where:

...there is no intention or need to make a statistical generalisation to any population beyond the sample surveyed (2002: 264).

The selection criteria used to choose the schools included their willingness to take part in the project, and non-participation in the inclusive education pilot project being implemented in the province. Non-pilot schools were selected to get a true picture of how teachers were generally experiencing the policy. I expected pilot schools to be getting excessive attention, which non-pilot schools would not. The latter would, then, provide a true gauge of what was actually happening district wide.

The case study consisted of three primary schools catering for grades R to 7. I chose to work with primary schools because all primary school grades (grades R to 7) and phases (foundation and intermediate phases) are supposedly implementing OBE. I assumed that as a result of their OBE experience, primary school teachers would be more aware of differences in the learner population, and would have developed some strategies for identifying and addressing these in their teaching. These schools constituted a holistic unit of analysis (Creswell, 1994; Durrheim, 1999). In other words, the conclusions drawn in this thesis are based on teachers' experiences and understanding of this policy in the three case study schools.

The selected schools were located in different contexts, administered by three circuits, two district offices and one provincial office. Two of the schools were in disadvantaged contexts (rural or township) serving African children from local communities. The third was located in a working class community previously reserved for white people, but now serving children from all communities and racial backgrounds. This combination of

schools (rural, urban, and peri-urban) was selected to reflect the different education contexts that exist in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and nationally. In addition to differences in location, schools differed in physical resources and learner-teacher ratios. Schools catering for middle- to upper- class children were deliberately excluded from the study as I assumed that they would have better resources to support teachers and learners in their learning, a condition that I felt would skew the findings. There are very few private schools and by nature they are exclusive in that you cannot gain admission unless you can afford their fees. Obviously, there is a need to examine whether and how these schools are approaching inclusive education, however, in this study the focus was on inclusive education policy dissemination to government schools where the majority of learners are schooled.

The following are the profiles of the schools that constituted the sample (summary provided in **Table 3**, page 163):

#### **5.3.3.1 Island View School**

Island View is a former Model C primary school located in the Shelley Beach district, in a working class suburb formerly reserved for whites. However, since 1994 and the abolition of apartheid laws, the community is rapidly integrating, and the school is similarly integrated. Model C schools, during the latter years of apartheid rule (from 1991), were schools reserved primarily for whites, but which chose to admit black learners (up to 50%) and to supplement their state subsidy through fees and donations (Karlsson et al, 2001).

This is a very old school, having recently celebrated its centenary. It was the only school in the case study where learners and teachers were racially mixed. Like the other two schools, it is a government school, but has far better resources than the rest because of the country's political history. As a result of historical factors, including the quantity and quality of resources available, this was the most advantaged of the three schools (ample playgrounds, sufficient learning and office spaces).

It took a while to gain full access to this school although the principal had eagerly accepted my request for access. The delay was due to the fact that the principal felt that he had to present my request at a management meeting first, before tabling it to the staff. As he put it:

*I want them (teachers) to be more involved and they cannot unless they know what's going on.*

Management and staff were finally informed in May 2004. Unfortunately, in spite of OBE and C2005, which encourages continuous assessment throughout the academic year, schools still make a fuss about examinations. This school also had half-year examinations scheduled from the end of May to early June. As a result, teachers were occupied with invigilating and marking and could not be disturbed. I effectively only began working with this school at the end of July and finished in September, 2004. In my mind, this delay in conveying my request to management was another indication that information does not move freely between the different subsystems of this school: a culture that needs to be challenged and changed (re-culturing as coined by Doyle, 2002), if communication is to improve. Another indication was the fact that a preliminary

report from the study was presented to the principal at the end of the analysis process. I also reminded him of the offer I had made to run some workshops on inclusive education. Although he thanked me and promised to table the report and the offer at the next management meeting, no feedback was received in response to both.

The majority of the learners attending this school are bussed in and out from neighbouring communities on a daily basis. Racially, the learners and teachers are mixed. Of the 32 teachers, two are black Africans, one is coloured, 14 are Indian and the rest are white. Five percent of the learners are white, 15% Indian and coloured, and 80% black African. The medium of instruction at this school is English. The school caters for grades R to 7. At the time of the study, there were two special classes, one intermediate and one senior. Although the teacher: learner ratio at this school is 1:38, in the special classes it is 1:15. It was interesting to note that these classes are located in a separate wing of the school, and that the learners in the special classes were mostly boys of African descent. I return to this later in the thesis.

### **5.3.3.2 Zungeza School**

The second school in the sample is located on the border between a township and a rural settlement on the southern outskirts of the Greyville district.

The communities served by this school are black Africans and the whole staff complement is also black African. There is a shocking shortage of resources: there is no staff room, which forces teachers to use their classrooms to eat and socialise, and



no playgrounds for the learners either. There is no administrative assistant at this school, but the school often gets regular assistance from a newly qualified typist who volunteers her services twice a week. This makes a big difference in the life of the principal who also has teaching responsibilities. The school has a media centre that functions mainly as a computer centre housing 10 old computers. There is a small levy (R5) per month for computer literacy classes, but not all learners take advantage of it, probably because of socio-economic circumstances at home. Each classroom has a small class "library" (English books) contained in a bookshelf, which learners are encouraged to read if they finish their class work early.

There is a critical shortage of classrooms of which the department has been aware for some time. In fact, according to the principal, the school has been promised six additional classrooms since 1999, but nothing has happened up to now. As a result, several prefabricated buildings have since been purchased to compensate for floor space shortage. These are small, over-crowded and poorly ventilated, and learners sit uncomfortably close to each other and to the board. The discomfort levels would be highest in summer when temperatures are likely to soar to +30 degrees Celsius. Teachers reported that some parents have complained about the placement of their children in the prefabs. There are no special classes at this school.

The process of gaining access to this school was very different from that of Island View. On my first visit to this school, I explained my research study to the principal and produced the departmental letter for her perusal. She thought it was a project worth

taking part in, but felt that teachers needed to make their own decisions. She asked me to address them and explain my purpose so that everybody would know what they were getting themselves into. She justified her approach by explaining that:

*There is a lot of suspicion about external appraisal; I do not want people to be half-hearted because they think you are from the Department (here to appraise them).*

We set a date when I could address her team. On the appointed day, I tabled my mission, the purpose of my research study, and what they could expect to be asked to do (if they agreed to take part) as well as what their school could expect to get in return. I also read out the permission letter from the provincial Department of Education to highlight the fact that they were not compelled to take part. After asking for clarification on a few things, I left the room to enable them to make a decision. After deliberating on the matter, they informed the principal and I that they were quite happy to take part. The principal then explained to me that there was a new appraisal system that had been implemented – one that the teachers were not happy about – and she did not want them to think she was hiding anything concerning this.

At the end of the data analysis process, a preliminary report from the study was presented to the principal. She invited her two deputies and the two HoDs to respond to it. This was the only school from which I got feedback on the report. They clarified some of the things they thought I had misunderstood, and I adjusted my analysis accordingly. At the end of the research process, I reminded them of the offer I had made to run some workshops on inclusive education, and they set aside two afternoons for staff development to take advantage of this offer.

### **5.3.3.3 Mangelengele School**

The third school in the study was a senior primary school located in a rural area on the western outskirts of the Greyville District. The school caters for grades 5 to 7 only. All the learners and teachers are black Africans.

Although solidly built, there are shortages of important physical resources at this school. For example, the Media Centre is used as a library, a staff room, a store room, a pantry, a sick room, and as an office for the deputy principal and the two HoDs. There are no playgrounds and no flush toilets. Although the school has running water, it often experiences water shortage. There is no administrative assistant at this school. As a result, the principal often has to do administrative work, attend principals' meetings, as well as attending to her teaching responsibilities. I was informed that these challenges are not unique to this school, but are common experiences in schools that serve rural communities.

This is the only school with a physically disabled learner on its roll. The grade-6 boy has an amputated leg and uses crutches to get around. The teachers and other learners seemed unconcerned about his disability, and make him participate in activities. I even saw him playing soccer with his friends. As in most rural communities, the rate of unemployment is very high and its effects are visible in the condition of learners' school uniforms. However, the school is not poor in terms of teaching and learning resources, thanks to the generosity of local and international donors.

My reception at this school was different from the other two schools. On my first visit, I presented my case to the principal, together with the letter from the provincial Department of Education. She indicated that she had never heard of inclusive education before, but would like to know more about it. She then took me to individual teachers in their classrooms and, after introductions; she explained what my mission was. She elaborated on the contents of the permission document I had produced, and explained that they were not obliged to take part in my work. However, she encouraged them to assist me wherever possible. When the earliest opportunity arose to address teachers collectively, I explained again what I was trying to do, and emphasised that participation was voluntary, before inviting them to take part. They wanted to know how the school would benefit, and I explained that the study would help identify issues in the diffusion of information about inclusion, as well as the training and support needed to prepare them for implementation. Here too I offered to facilitate staff development workshops on inclusive education at the conclusion of the study.

The staff complement changed twice during the course of this study as the department revised Post Provisioning Norms (henceforth referred to as PPN) computations. The PPN is a standardised staffing policy that uses the number of learners on the roll to calculate the quota of teachers a school qualifies for. Initially there were 11 teachers when the research project first started. This was later reduced to 10, and then increased to 11 again. The deputy principal post, which they lost, was later reinstated due to some technical error with the PPN

calculations. Teachers, understandably, found this uncertainty with regard to their positions very unsettling.

Most of the learners were from the local community, but a few travelled long distances to get to school. Teachers estimated that some walk more than two kilometres each way. As such, learners are often tired by the time they get to school and their level of participation in the learning process is adversely affected. These disadvantages would be further exacerbated, if these learners also came from families where food is scarce, as they would be both hungry and tired, and unable to concentrate. At the end of the data analysis process, this school was also presented with a preliminary report that tabled my findings, but they did not respond to this document. However, they did take advantage of the staff development offer and it has already started.

Categories	Mangelengele	Island View	Zungeza
Teachers (including SMT)	10	32	27
SMT	4 (principal, deputy, and 2 HoDs)	5 (Principal, deputy, 3 HoDs)	5 (principal, 2 deputies, 2 HoDs)
Support staff	1	13	1
Learners	422	956	1107
Teacher: learner	1:42	1:38	1:52
Offices	1	7	2
Classrooms	15	26	21

**Table 3: Participating schools' profiles**

Before data collection, my assumption was that the better resourced a school, the more receptive it will be to the idea of inclusive education. However, data collected shows that this is not necessarily so. This will be discussed further in **Chapter Seven**.

#### **5.3.4 Sources and methods**

Data collection began in April 2003 and was completed in September 2004. During this period, in an attempt to triangulate the data collected (Robson, 2002) and to assure the trustworthiness of the findings in this study, different types of data sources were consulted, and different data collection methods employed. In addition, different samples were constituted at various stages of the study. The different respondents consulted in this study (excluding the pilot) included teachers and principals of the three participating schools as well as the provincial CES for PGSES. Other sources of data included incidental conversations, observations of schools and district workshops, and analysis of official documents in the schools.

##### **5.3.4.1 Teachers**

Teachers were the main respondents in this study as I wanted to understand how they understood and experienced the newly adopted policy of inclusion (EWP6). To obtain the teachers' perspectives, first, all the teachers in the three schools were asked to fill in a questionnaire (**Appendix C**) that collected biographical information and solicited their understanding of inclusive education. It was also used to establish their awareness of, and response to, learners experiencing learning difficulties. Last, it ascertained the

role played by subject, grade and union meetings, and INSET programmes, in preparing them for effective practice. Data obtained from these questionnaires, was checked against the schools' audit and the focus group interviews. In schools where it was possible to observe classes, I was able to see if what had been reported in questionnaires was visible in the classroom, even though I had no idea who had made those claims.

Out of 70 questionnaires distributed, 42 (60%) were returned. Of the 42 teachers who returned the questionnaire, only five (12%) are male. This is not unusual as primary schools tend to have a majority of female teachers. Nine (21%) of the respondents had bachelor's degrees and only one (0.02%) had a post-graduate degree. Sixteen (38%) had four year diplomas or other upgraded qualifications, while 14 (33%) were under-qualified, with only two- or three-year qualifications. It should be noted that until quite recently, a three-year diploma was the standard teacher qualification in African schools. Three (0.07%) did not respond to this question. It was not clear if any teachers from this group were studying to improve their qualifications or not. With regard to teaching experience, 10 (24%) had less than 10 years experience; in the 11-20 years bracket there were 23 (55%), and nine (21%) were in the 21-30 bracket. Only one (0.02%) had experience that exceeded 30 years.

Second, to get data on the actual proceedings at each school, with specific relation to EWP6 and inclusive education, focus group interviews (**Appendix D**) were conducted with teachers in all the schools. These interviews replaced classroom observations

since the pilot study had revealed that there was not much happening yet around the development of inclusive classrooms. This form of interview was selected because it has the potential to “provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interview” (Fontana & Frey, 1998: 50-51), but through group interaction (Struwig & Stead, 2001). For focus-group interviews, the intention was to select participants using stratified random sampling. In stratified random sampling, the population is divided into strata or layers, and the sample is drawn randomly from each stratum (Burns, 2000). I intended to take into account some of the characteristics of the groups studied, for example: experience, grade level taught, and seniority.

However, the reality was that it was not possible to organise things in this way due to various contextual factors. I indicated to principals that I needed samples that would be knowledgeable about what went on in different grades and the school as a whole regarding learner and teacher support. On the appointed days, I arrived to find selected teachers ready. For example, in two of the schools (Zungeza and Island View), due to the internal structures, it was more appropriate to interview grade tutors (senior educators in a grade) as they were leaders in their grades. In the end, at Zungeza, eight grade teachers plus one deputy principal participated in the focus interview, while at Island View, seven participated. Things worked differently at Mangelengele because it is a smaller school with two Heads of Departments and no grade tutors. In addition, on the appointed day, three members of their staff were absent; as a result, all the teachers present on that day took part in the focus group interview – seven in all.



The focus group interviews were centred around two fictitious scenarios and a set of questions to which teachers had to respond. The purpose of creating these scenarios was to establish educators' perceptions and responses regarding inclusion. All focus groups interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The sessions lasted from 40 minutes to just over an hour, depending on the teachers' level of participation.

The focus-group interviews lent themselves well to the study's research questions. In this research project they were used to complement the questionnaire data that was collected at the beginning of the study. The scenarios were used to generate discussion among teachers. During the focus-group talks, teachers discussed what they considered the best ways to address the learners' educational needs within the fictitious contexts. Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996) conclude that this method of data collection provides a chance to elicit the views and attitudes of key stakeholders about new policies. Another advantage of this method of data collection argued by Denzin (1989b), cited in Fontana and Frey (1998), is that it can be used for purposes of triangulation.

In addition, whenever time allowed, unplanned informal discussions were held with teachers in these schools, during the duration of the study, to clarify issues and to raise new ones as the study developed.

#### 5.3.4.2 School principals

One component of data collection included doing an audit of human and physical resources available to each of the schools. For this purpose, first a questionnaire or school audit (**Appendix E**) was given to principals to complete. The document sought information on the organisational structure of the schools and the resources available (both human and physical) to them. This was an important tool to obtain information on staff complements, qualifications of teachers, teacher development, and support programmes. Data generated from this audit was checked against teachers' self-completion questionnaires.

Second, semi-structured interviews with principals (**Appendix F**) were used to collect more information on the organisational structure and procedures of the schools. Principals are, because of their leadership positions, the main link between schools and the outside world. For this purpose, I interviewed all three principals, as I thought it important to include all of them in the sample. In addition, I did not rule out the possibility that their views on how things work in the school may differ from the teachers' views. Furthermore, as part of school management, they were likely to be more informed about reforms taking place in the department. Therefore, it was possible that they had different perceptions of the new policy.

Through the interviews, the study also sought to establish each school's readiness to implement EWP6, or their current stage of implementation. Specifically, the interviews were used to find out if the schools already had a culture of support, and to establish if

the district support services were readily accessible to schools. All interviews were conducted in the principals' offices during school time. These were recorded (with permission) and later transcribed, and given back to the principals for verification. At Mangelengele, the interview coincided with the school break, and the noise levels interfered with the recording. After several attempts to transcribe proved fruitless, the principal was asked to fill in an additional questionnaire to replace the ruined interview.

Data obtained from interviews highlighted the participants' perspectives, and illustrated the inner dynamics of the school contexts under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: 33). The value of the interviews was that I could verify earlier claims about the participants' relationship with the districts, and about their staff development programmes. In addition to formal interviews, situational or "incidental" conversations were treated as useful data. These were sometimes used to clarify any matters that seemed unclear (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Two of the principals were very open people, so I learnt a lot about their work from our conversations.

#### **5.3.4.3 District and provincial staff**

As the research study progressed, it became clear that the Shelley Beach district was not disseminating information about EWP6, nor were they engaged with the implementation process. For this reason, the District Office was not included in the data collection process. On the other hand, Greyville was part of the provincial pilot and was also involved in dissemination, so they were the only district that I interacted with on a regular basis. Informal discussions were held with key staff at this district – particularly

the CES – to ascertain what activities were being undertaken to prepare schools for EWP6, in terms of mobilised support and training. However, since all data obtained from the schools showed that there was not much support being given by the districts, I decided not to interview Greyville district either. Instead, I relied on incidental conversations to get a picture of how this district was engaging with issues of professional development and support.

Although I had decided not to hold formal interviews with the district office-based officials, I was curious to know what the provincial level had planned regarding the pilot programme and the general implementation of the policy. As a result, a formal interview (**Appendix G**) was held with the provincial CES of the Inclusive Education Directorate, to get a perspective on what was currently happening, and what was planned for the future within the province. The CES was identified as the person to interview, as it was her directorate that was driving the merger of special education with regular education. The interview took place in her office and it was one hour long. At her suggestion, it was not recorded because she felt that she would be very self-conscious, if she knew our conversation was being recorded verbatim. Notes were then taken and these were verified at a pilot meeting a few weeks later, where she addressed the Greyville district on the provincial plans.

#### **5.3.4.4 Observations**

Triangulation of method (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 19) or data triangulation (Denzin, 1988, cited in Robson, 2002) allows for the use of more than one method of collecting

data. Observations were conducted to address the following research question: what support is available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to shift from the old system of education to the new one? I also wanted to verify some of the things the teachers had said (in the questionnaire) that they were doing in the classroom. Teachers' interactions in the staffroom were also observed, and particular attention was paid to their conversations about what goes on in the classrooms to see if it confirmed what they had reported in the questionnaires. It was also possible to verify some of these observations during focus-group interviews.

These observations started as soon as I was granted permission to conduct the study. I had chosen to be a participant observer as I felt that it would allow me to be seen as one of the group. That way I would be able to capture their interactions as they unfolded naturally in the work environment (Freebody, 2003). In one school, they were so keen to take advantage of the research process that I was invited to observe lessons, while in another I was asked to take classes if teachers were away on courses. I was happy to be involved in this manner as it meant that they viewed me as one of them, and it did allow me to get closer to them. Of most importance was the fact that it also enabled me to assess the level of support available to learners in the classroom. Had the identities of the teachers been revealed on the questionnaires, this opportunity could have been truly useful in verifying what they said they do, and what I actually observed them do.

A research journal was kept throughout the study. Kumar (1996) maintains that the main advantage of narrative recording is that it gives a better understanding of the interaction. Whenever possible, observations of interactions that I thought would be of value to the study were recorded in this journal as they unfolded, or as soon afterwards as possible. There was no structured observation schedule as I was not looking for specific behaviours. At the end of each visit I tried to go through the notes to see if there were any gaps that needed filling in. It was during this reflection time that I recorded my impressions and interpretations of the interactions I had observed.

In addition to observing class and school interactions, I sought permission to attend and observe staff development workshops from the Greyville district's special education CES. As indicated earlier, this district was one of three that were running provincial pilots. In addition, Greyville also ran advocacy workshops for teachers to raise their awareness of the new policy. All their schools were invited to attend, but because they used the cascade model, only one or two teachers per school attended. Shelley Beach was not involved in the pilot programme, as they had reportedly completed their awareness campaign in 2002.

I observed proceedings at these workshops in an attempt to get first-hand experience of the type of advocacy and training teachers were receiving in preparation for the new policy. I kept notes of my observations on the nature and content of the workshops, and the teachers' responses to them. As already indicated earlier, my focus was on schools that were not part of the pilot as I believed they were not receiving special

attention. I felt that dealing with non-pilot schools would give me a clearer picture of what the experiences of teachers in this situation were.

#### **5.3.4.5 Analysis of documents**

To further strengthen the triangulation of my data (Robson, 2002), official documents were analysed at each of the three schools. Because documents do not change, they are said to be a rich source of historical information, which are more reliable than memories (Nisbet & Watt, 1984; Hodder, 1998). They allow the researcher access to data that would normally be forgotten and/or unavailable. In this study, they were used to gain insight into the official discourses of teachers' everyday lives (Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995). The documents analysed included policy documents developed at each school (where available) and each school's mission statement. In addition, official notices or circulars were scrutinised to check references to the policy of inclusion. It was hoped that all these documents would shed light on how much information reaches each school, how much of that is shared with the rest of the staff, and – most importantly – how information is used to inform practice. In addition, the ways in which the school policies and other documents already reflected the principles of inclusive education was investigated.

Robson (1993) views document analysis as an indirect method of gathering data because you deal with something meant to fulfil a different purpose from the one you are using it for. One advantage he mentions is that documents do not react to the researcher; they are not affected or influenced by the fact that you are using them for

your investigation (ibid). However, he cautions that since documents are not produced for research purposes, it is possible for distortions or biases to creep in during analysis. To prevent these biases and/or distortions, he suggests the need for triangulation with other sources (Robson, 2002), which was done in this study.

### **5.3.5 Data analysis**

In an attempt to bring order, structure, and meaning to the collected data, data analysis was continuous (Rossman & Rallis, 1998: 176). In qualitative research, data analysis is never a separate process from data collection. Instead, it is a process that happens simultaneously with data collection (Mertens, 1998), data interpretation, and narrative report writing (Creswell, 1994). For example, the conclusions reached in the exploratory study influenced the direction of the main study. The paucity of interaction between schools and districts or circuits led to the decision to drop the office-based staff from the interviews. The survey data, interviews, and observation data were used to guide further data collection in the form of focus-group interviews, although formal analysis only occurred towards the completion of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Mertens & MacLaughlin, 1995).

Qualitative researchers agree that analysis is a cyclical, continuous process involving three phases, namely: data reduction, data organisation, and interpretation (Sarantakos, 1993; Huberman & Miles, 1994). Data reduction, according to Huberman and Miles (op. cit.), is a continuous process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming data during the course of the research project, and data organisation is the act of



sorting out information so that a conclusion can be drawn and action taken (ibid, 10-11). All data collected went through several compressions (Huberman & Miles, 1998) as I summarised it looking for patterns. I held a "conversation with the data" (Merriam, 1988: 131), which means that I familiarised myself with it, putting my thoughts and reflections on paper, and categorised them in terms of themes. Emerging patterns were classified and reclassified as more data was collected, until overarching themes were finally identified. I was fortunate that halfway through my analysis, an NVivo course for beginners was held. This enabled me to verify my manual analysis with the NVivo analysis. Once my interview transcripts were converted into NVivo files, the process of identifying codes (categories) and emerging themes was started. As analysis progressed, related codes were merged until the main themes emerged. This process continued until all data had been analysed and classified. Although I found NVivo useful in reducing all the masses of data to patterns or themes (Creswell, 1994), and collating it into meaningful chunks of information (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), I found it a bit disappointing that there were no short-cuts to obtaining results. It did what I had already done manually, only faster. Maybe in an advanced course, one learns more resourceful ways of using this software.

In the next chapter, I present the findings and discuss them according to the themes identified.

### 5.3.6 Developing trustworthiness

A number of techniques were used to develop the trustworthiness of collected data. The first step was data triangulation. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) define data triangulation as collecting data from more than one location and/or source, using a range of techniques. It can also be used to get different information on the same issue, or to supplement the weakness of one method with the strength of another (Sarantakos, 1993). This practice enables the researcher to verify the validity of findings through crosschecking perspectives that emerge from different sources (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989; Sarantakos, 1993). Since this was a case study, it lent itself well to data triangulation. Consequently, the study documented a variety of evidence obtained from different sources of data, collected over a period of 10 months for triangulation or crosschecking purposes (Nisbet & Watt; 1984). All data collected could be corroborated independent of method or source.

Member checks were also used to establish credibility. This involved verifying the developing constructions from the collected and analysed data with participants (Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995: 54). The patterns and/or themes generated from data were verified with the informants (only with the key informants, since there were too many participants) to check if the conclusions arrived at were an accurate account of their experiences. In addition, reports were presented to each of the participating schools on what the study had shown about the organisation and readiness of each of the schools to implement inclusive education (see **Appendix J**). Schools' responses (where available) were taken into account in the final analysis.

### **5.3.7 Ethical considerations**

A variety of ethical considerations were pertinent during data collection and analysis. First, in terms of gaining access to schools, permission was obtained from the responsible directorate in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Access to schools was negotiated with principals, as gatekeepers, and teachers, as potential participants. Second, informed consent (Fontana & Frey, 1998) was obtained from both teachers and principals, based on their understanding of the purpose of the study, and their willingness to participate in it. Third, at the beginning of the study, the participants were assured of their anonymity, the anonymity of their schools, and the confidentiality of our interactions throughout the research process, as well as in the thesis and the publications that are likely to follow. However, it is difficult to protect the Provincial CES' identity under the confidentiality clause, and she was made aware of this when she took part in the study. All participants were assured that the contents of our conversations, whether taped or not, would be used solely for the study. Fourth, ethical clearance to conduct this study was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **5.3.8 Design limitations**

The research design adopted in this study had several limitations. The first relates to the researcher as instrument, in which my own biases might have influenced what I observed and heard in the research setting (Robson, 2002; Drew et al, 1996). The methodological triangulation referred to previously went a long way to limiting the

impact of this bias, by providing answers to the research questions from different sources and perspectives.

A second limitation I experienced was related to time limits. I could only visit each site once a fortnight, which meant that a lot of interactions went on in my absence, and sometimes things I observed, had actually started when I was not present. Since I enjoyed a good rapport with the teachers, I relied on incidental conversations with them to keep up-to-date about events and other interactions that had taken place in my absence. Sources of rapport included both HoDs at Mangengele. One of them was an acquaintance from our high school days, and the other one was pursuing further studies in inclusive education at another university. A friend of mine, who worked at Island View, was another good source of information. These relationships were open and known to all staff. In addition, the principal of Zungeza was very keen to develop an inclusive school as she had done a module where inclusive education was part of the curriculum, and she had already attended a school governance workshop on inclusion. As a result of her enthusiasm, we had long conversations about what she was happening or planned at her school.

A third limitation of this study was linked to the case study design and sample size. From a sample of three schools, it may not be possible to generalise the findings and get a clear picture of the state of affairs within the province. However, within these constraints and limitations, several lessons and implications for policy and practice can still be learnt from the three schools. Case studies, by their nature, are suited to small,

in-depth studies rather than large-scale studies. For this reason, they are not meant to be generalisable as the aim is to understand the role of contextual factors (Nisbet & Watt, 1984; Lindegger, 1999) in influencing practice. However, the results obtained were useful in making theoretical generalisations because “they yield theoretical insights which possess a sufficient degree of generality or universality to allow their projection to other contexts or situations” (Sim, 1998, cited in Robson, 2002: 177). For example, from the ideas generated by this case study, I have been able to theorise about how information about innovations needs to be diffused. This is developed further in **Chapter Seven**.

Finally, my views on inclusive education have been influenced by my own experiences as a teacher in a segregated special school, and as a lecturer in special needs education. When I taught in a special school, we experienced considerable isolation, neglect, and ridicule. This experience may have been a limitation in that I lost hope that the system would ever reform and bring the marginalised learners into the fold. Now that my field of teaching at university is inclusive education, the comments I hear from my students at in-service and pre-service levels regarding challenges teachers face everyday in their schools, may have led me to conclude that it would be very difficult to put this system of education into practice. As a result of these experiences, some preconceived ideas and biases may have been brought into the study (Creswell, 1994). Although everything possible was done to ensure objectivity (e.g. through methodological and theoretical triangulation), there is always a possibility that these biases and preconceptions may have influenced what data was collected and how it

was viewed and interpreted (ibid). However, this problem is not confined to this study; it is in fact a shortcoming that generally affects studies.

The next chapter presents the findings from the study.

## CHAPTER SIX

### How do teachers understand and experience the new inclusive education policy? Presentation and analysis of findings

*Senge..... argues that our school system suffers from 'learning disabilities'. These disabilities inhibit the ability to see problems we face with an open mind. Instead we are plagued by the habits, inferences and ineffective past experiences which serve to inform our interpretations of the present and to drive us to 'maintain and tinker' (Fullan, 1991) rather than to transform (Clarke, 2000: 10).*

#### 6.1 Introduction

The study presented in this thesis was premised on the notion that teachers' knowledge and acceptance of the policy of inclusion (EWP6), as well as their implementation of it, is likely to be influenced by how well they and other stakeholders – at different levels of the education system – are informed about it. In addition, their experiences of the innovation will be determined by the type and quality of professional development and training they receive, as well as the support they get, and how they mobilise in preparation for its implementation. Furthermore, the study was premised on the notion that the Ministry of Education has different subsystems, all of which equally contribute to the effective and efficient provision of education in the country and province. As such, the success of inclusive education and its implementation will depend on whether, in preparing the system for the implementation of the policy, these

stakeholders and sectors participate equally in all stages of the diffusion of innovation, from conveying information and training, right through to implementation.

Thus, the study revolved around the following three research questions:

- How do teachers understand and experience EWP6 and inclusive education?
- What strategies are used to manage the diffusion of information about EWP6 and inclusive education in the province, in general, and in the district in which the three schools are located, in particular? In what ways do these strategies impact on the teachers' understandings and experiences of the innovation?
- What support is available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to understand and embrace the new system of education?

In seeking to address the aforementioned research questions, this study used a qualitative multi-site case study approach, which focused on three primary schools. Two of these, Mangelengele and Zungeza, are located in the Greyville District. Island View is found in the Shelley Beach District; both districts fall under KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Data collection methods included a combination of a teacher questionnaire, individual and focus-group interviews, school observations, document analyses, and an audit. The unit of analysis comprised three schools identified above. In this chapter, rather than being presented as separate case studies, data analysis is aggregated across the three schools and presented according to themes emerging from the data.



The first section of this chapter will briefly reflect on the research process, namely, how and why my research focus and research questions were refined, as well as how the different theoretical frameworks worked (or did not work) during the research process. In the main section of the chapter, I present and analyse the findings of the study. In order to structure this process, the findings are organised and presented according to the major themes which were identified during data analysis, and were informed by the research questions.

## **6.2 The research process**

As the teachers' understandings of the policy have to be interpreted within the context in which meaning making takes place, the overarching theoretical framework for the research study was social constructivism. In this context, learning is socially mediated. If all learning is social, then the ways in which teachers unpack and interrogate the new policy and its implications for their practice is a collective exercise, even if they may at times engage individually in the construction of their meaning and knowledge. This theory then provided the broad framework, while other conceptual and theoretical frameworks were used to underpin data collection and analysis. These were the concept and philosophy of inclusion, the concept of re-culturing, and the systems theory. Since I do not work with the Department of Education, it was necessary to conduct an exploratory study (pilot) right at the beginning to get a clear picture of what was actually happening in the province regarding inclusion. At that time, my assumption – as reflected in the research questions – was that the policy statement was already

being implemented. However the pilot showed that not much was being done in terms of implementation. Instead, it showed that the schools, due to historical factors, were grappling with different issues. As a result, there were different priorities for different schools – priorities that would, if ignored, have a negative impact on implementation.

For this reason, this study aimed to investigate the ways in which teachers understood the concept and philosophy of inclusion as contained in the newly adopted EWP6.

First, in order to address this focus, the concept and philosophy of inclusion was used to examine the teachers' understandings of inclusion, its rationale and discourses, and the shift from exclusive focus on the individual, to focus on the social context in which learning takes place. Most importantly, however, it was useful in highlighting the teachers' understandings of the elusiveness of the concept of inclusion because of its link to specific context, and its varied meanings in different contexts.

Second, by using the concept of re-culturing (Clarke, 2000; Doyle, 2002), I sought to understand the factors that impacted on the teachers' understandings of inclusive education, and the ways in which these reflected a deep transformation of the school culture. This includes examining a change in behaviour, which leads to teachers and other stakeholders debating, and collectively deciding what to unlearn (from their past) and what to learn (for their future) (Clarke, 2000). In essence, the question I asked was: to what extent and in what ways are teachers and schools changing the ways they think about teaching, and the manner in which they practise teaching?

Third, the systems theory allowed me to look at each of the schools from two perspectives: as a complete system with its own subsystems and its own context, and as a subsystem within a wider context (Donald et al, 2002) of districts, provinces, and even a national system. In South Africa, school systems are linked to ward, circuit, and district, as well as to provincial and national offices by policies that regulate the practice of education. Logically, one expects that they are provided with support within these levels. It was these contexts that framed my interpretation of teachers' experiences of the policy of inclusion. The systems theory was also useful in examining the type and levels of support available to teachers from the wider system, as well as from the schools themselves. This support would pave the way and render the school environments open to the effective implementation of the innovation. In addition, the theory was useful in highlighting how teachers as a subsystem of the school system, can either be empowered or disempowered if, in their school or district, there are no strong, supportive connections between management and teachers.

In addition, one of the major concerns for the province was that the playing field was not level for schools and their communities. To illustrate, while schools that historically served white children and communities have been comparatively well resourced (in terms of both human and material resources), those that served black Africans have borne the brunt of the apartheid legacy of inequalities. Furthermore, large areas of this province are rural and – in the past – these areas have been greatly marginalised in terms of development (Department of Education, 1997). Emerging from this scenario

are questions related to the extent to which the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education would have taken these varying contextual realities into consideration in its roll-out plan for the dissemination of EWP6. Consequently, the study attempted to investigate the ways in which the differences in the contexts that make up our schooling system would influence the teachers' understandings and experiences of EWP6, and the introduction of inclusive education in schools. As described in **Chapter Five**, the sample included a former Model 'C' school, a township school, and a rural school. None of the schools selected for the study were part of the district pilot programme, and the reasons for this were that pilot schools receive a lot of attention, which is not a true reflection of attention or support that is generally available to them outside the pilot study. As a result, I wanted to focus on ordinary schools as I thought that these would paint an authentic picture of what was happening in schools generally.

Findings from the pilot study conducted in 2003, as reported in **Chapter Five**, suggested that the implementation of the inclusive education policy in schools had not yet started. As such, the research focus and questions in this study changed from implementation to dissemination. The study focused on the ways in which information about inclusive education was being communicated within the education system, and to teachers specifically. In essence, the diffusion of inclusive education became the focus of the study. By this stage, I was convinced that if teachers and other stakeholders in the schools did not have a comprehensive and satisfactory understanding of inclusion, they would not be able to start questioning their practice in light of the emerging paradigm and its discourse, and they would not be able to develop and implement

effective inclusive programmes. It was at this point that I came to the realisation that I needed another theoretical framework to help me understand the context under study better, and the theory of innovation diffusion was identified as the philosophy to best fill in the identified gap. This theory highlights how, within a set time, a new idea that has been adopted at senior level is passed on to the specific constituency for implementation (Rogers, 2003).

The second phase of data collection for the case study took place in the three schools, the Greyville district, and Directorate of Inclusive Education, between January 2004 and September 2004. In order to answer the research questions identified previously, different types of data were collected and analysed. Data collection was informed by the conceptual and theoretical frameworks referred to above (inclusive education, re-culturing, the systems theory, and the innovation diffusion theory) and included an audit of resources, the analysis of documents, general observations, individual and focus-group interviews, as well as self-completed questionnaires. Although the three schools constituted the unit of analysis, data collected in this study also provided some perspective on the role the districts, the province, and – to some extent – the national department were playing in the dissemination of the policy to schools and teachers. From the findings obtained, data was organised into broad categories, which were – through further analysis – combined into five interrelated themes.

### 6.3 Findings from the study

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**Table 4: Advance organiser of the findings**

Overall, data analysis in this study seems to confirm my initial propositions that, first, teachers – as the key agents of the intended implementation of EWP6 – displayed limited and varied understandings of the new policy and concept of inclusion, within the three schools in this study. The findings suggest that various factors have led to this state of affairs. These are discussed in the sections below. In addition, the findings suggest that teachers and others did not generally embrace EWP6 in the schools. Reasons for this included inadequate and inappropriate training and professional development strategies and models, as well as inadequate support for teachers and schools to prepare for the implementation of EWP6 and inclusive education.

This study was premised on the notion that due to different contextual factors (multiple policy reform and social contexts), each school reacted differently to the manifold innovations that were being introduced in education, including EWP6. Sometimes the schools seemed overwhelmed by all the changes taking place, and at other times they seemed oblivious to the changes. In a few instances, the schools seemed to be

capitalising on the culture of reform to improve their practice. However, the purpose of this investigation was not to make comparisons among the three schools, but rather to examine how each context was responding to, and felt supported in, the challenge of developing inclusive practice.

### **6.3.1 Teachers' understandings of inclusive education**

The first research question in this study investigated teachers' understandings and experiences of EWP6 and inclusive education. To this effect, the findings from the study suggest that there was a limited understanding of EWP6 and inclusive education among the teachers who participated in the study, with some showing no understanding of it at all. In a way, this highlighted the need for more extensive professional development of teachers when new ideas are introduced. This is taken up again later in this chapter.

Of particular relevance to this study were the findings that the medical discourse has greatly influenced education. This discourse, which is preoccupied with deficits within learners (Fulcher, 1989) at the exclusion of contextual factors within the learning context (UNESCO, 1993), dominated the teachers' understandings of inclusive education. For example, findings from the questionnaire suggested that many teachers had mistaken beliefs about inclusive education. Twenty-eight out of 42 (67%) teachers equated inclusive education with teaching disabled learners in mainstream schools, rather than actually creating welcoming classrooms where all learners feel they belong, and are encouraged to participate in the learning process. For me, these types of misconceptions were not surprising. First, as discussed in the previous chapters, most

of the teachers teaching in schools today were trained according to the medical model, and the values, beliefs, and practices of this model have become entrenched in their way of thinking and teaching. Research suggests that most teachers tend to teach in the same way they were taught in their own schools (e.g. Lortie, 1975 cited in Hyde, 1992: 172). For obvious reasons, changing these discourses and teaching practices would require concerted efforts to provide continuous professional development and support. Unfortunately, as the findings of this study suggest, this has not been the case. Instead, the workshops intended for the dissemination of this policy, and the training and preparation of teachers and other officials for its implementation, were once off and rushed events. For example, one of the workshops I attended that aimed to raise awareness to EWP6 lasted for two hours, and there were no follow-up sessions planned.

In addition, the district relied on the use of the cascade model to inform the many teachers at school level about EWP6. As a result, only one or two teachers from each school attended the workshop and were expected to pass this information and knowledge on to others at their schools. However, research findings suggest that the strategy was not working (Department of Education, 2001b). The ineffectiveness of the cascade model and the teachers' limited understandings of inclusive education were well illustrated at Mangelengele School. Here, the questionnaire was completed a week after the school had received feedback from a teacher who had attended an awareness-raising workshop on inclusive education. One teacher, who said she had attended an



INSET session where inclusive education was discussed, gave the following definition of inclusive education:

*It is about all schools catering for normal learners and learners with different disability. (Questionnaire 37, hereafter Q and a number will be used)*

As a result of her report and her understanding of inclusive education, questionnaire data suggested that a similarly limited understanding of inclusive education had developed among some of the other teachers in the school. For example, one teacher defined it as when '*normal learners and disabilities learners learn together*' (Q38), while another responded that EWP6 is meant to address the fact that:

*Disabled learners actually need special attention and not to be neglected. They must be given a chance to play with others, e.g. soccer or netball. (Q39)*

However, since these misunderstandings were common in the three schools – for me – the question was: how did the teachers in these schools develop such similar misconceptions? Could it be mere coincidence that in all three schools there was a similarly limited understanding of inclusive education, or did the information and training they received at the district level lead to these misconceptions?

When one takes into consideration the fact that people (teachers) learn with and from each other (social constructivist view of learning), and that the cascade model of teacher training was being used to introduce them to inclusive education and EWP6, it is not surprising that teachers in these schools had similar misconceptions about the concept. A further explanation for these mistaken beliefs could be the fact that inclusive education is an international phenomenon, and that various countries and contexts define it

differently. Thus, it is possible that teachers in these school contexts were constructing their own understandings of the concept of inclusion based on their local contexts. In addition, the inadequacy of training, coupled with a lack of clarity on how this concept is conceptualised in EWP6, leaves teachers with no choice but to string together bits and pieces of information they have gathered over the years, which are based on their own interpretations and experiences.

Furthermore, as proof of their poor understanding of inclusive education, findings from this study suggest that despite the release of EWP6 – because of its inadequate dissemination in the system – teachers' comprehension of the nature of teaching and learning has not shifted. The values and beliefs that underpin teaching and learning in the schools continue to reflect the medical discourse and what Clarke (2000) and Doyle (2002) refer to as re-culturing, has not occurred. A comment made by one of the questionnaire respondents substantiated this lack of transformation:

*The government encourages this inclusive education to take part in our schools but the majority of educators were not trained nor educated about how to deal with disabled learners... I think the government should provide the cheapest institution which... will provide things that disabled children need.... (Q16)*

Another respondent was convinced that her school could implement inclusive education because 'Island View has already a junior/senior special education class. Qualified educators teach them.' (Q8). While teachers from the three schools used a similar discourse (the medical) to articulate their understandings of inclusive education, differences also emerged in their views about the new system. For example, it was interesting to note that Zungeza Primary, although it had less expertise (in terms of

teacher qualifications) and resources, was more receptive to the idea of inclusive education than the more affluent Island View. The teachers' assessments of their school's ability to implement this policy were promising. For example, in the focus-group interview, one of the teachers declared that, "Yes, *it will be successfully implemented because we have already attempted it.*" In a similar tone, a teacher at Mangelengele assessed his school's readiness as follows:

*It can... since we are committed to see or to include all the learners as per our vision and mission statement. We strive to uplift our community. So with the support of the principal, we want to implement what is set by the government. So we are that kind of people.*

This response was very different from what this teacher had said a few days earlier. I refer to the reasons for this conformity later on in this chapter.

However, Island View, which is the more affluent of the schools, had a negative assessment of its ability to deal with this policy, as illustrated by the following comment from a teacher in the focus-group interview:

*I think we cannot... because it will be difficult... These children need much more time and attention and I think of our situation now, it will be extremely difficult.*

The following statement, made by another Island View teacher, demonstrated her school's non-acceptance of the innovation, perhaps due to its complexity and the lack of training and support the teacher received to implement it:

*The children are at their primary years, so you can include them at this stage, but as they grow up, their levels vary so much or their performance. So you not just looking at age... you look at their different levels. Sometimes we can work with one level but what is the department gonna use as a cut off for them to move up? When are you going to move them up so that they could progress? When are we gonna move from one grade to another grade? When they are 10 years old and they are still at level... one, do they move to the next grade? ...you sit in the classroom and you wonder: Is it to their benefit to be included at*

*the end of the day? Where then do you draw the line for them to move on? If they are 9 years old and they are still functioning as five year olds...*

During a focus-group interview session at a nearby special school (for the purposes of another study), the assessment of the school's ability to effectively implement inclusion was also negative, perhaps indicating their reluctance to shift from the medical model that has been operating there over the years. To illustrate, one of the teachers argued:

*Yes, I think it can because we are used to such challenges. We can be able to accommodate other learners.*

However, the other teachers disagreed and the following discussion ensued:

**Teacher 2:** *No, I'm just thinking that it will be challenging. Yah, it will be very challenging.*

**Researcher:** *To become inclusive?*

**Teacher 2:** *Yes. For all of us because we have to have different learners in our classroom; prepare different worksheets for them, yah I should think we will not be able to do an independent educational programme for most of the learners. So it will be challenging.*

On one hand, throughout the focus-group interviews conducted, it was clear that the teachers' understandings and experiences of EWP6 were similar: their understanding of the new policy ranged from non-existent to very limited and/or distorted, and were aligned with the medical model. In addition, all the teachers felt professionally unprepared for inclusive education, and did not understand why they were expected to implement it. On the other hand, the Mangelengele teacher's response was uncharacteristic in its conformity. Such compliance, or what Mattson and Harley (2003) refer to as mimicry, seems to be a strategy that teachers adopt as they blindly follow procedures that they do not understand, in an attempt to appear competent. What

actually surprised me was the fact that this compliant teacher had earlier challenged the exclusion of teachers in the policy process. The question that emerges is: why did he act so docile and answer differently in the presence of his colleagues? A few days earlier he had raised a very valid argument in our conversation about teachers being excluded from the process of educational reforms (see pp. 203-204). However, he was a different person in the presence of his colleagues, and it was evident that he did not want to rock the boat.

One explanation for this could be that teachers tend to respond differently to situations and issues, depending on where they find themselves (e.g. among their colleagues, in their own classrooms with learners, or among other professionals and managers). As such, while he was critical of the process in his conversation with me – perhaps because he believed that I would also be disapproving of the process – he had to behave differently in the presence of his colleagues, which meant not questioning the status quo. Although I understand the procedure followed in the diffusion of this innovation, and I understand that most of the teachers reject inclusive education – simply because they do not understand it – I found it inconsistent that in the new South Africa where stakeholder participation is a catch phrase, teachers are still expected to reproduce the agenda of the state and to implement policies that they do not formulate. Maybe it is for this reason that Carrim (2003: 318) views teachers “as subjects, rather than agents, of change”.

The above analysis indicates that, contrary to the principles of inclusive education, the teachers in these schools still thought in terms of separate provision for learners who experience barriers to learning and development – particularly those with disabilities. This lack of shift in thinking is understandable when one considers that the adoption of inclusive education was an authority innovation-decision (Rogers, 2003), in which the decision to adopt is made by a few individuals with power within a system, and the employees are expected to comply. Another contributing factor to this lack of change in thinking is the poor communication or dissemination of the policy to the various subsystems within the education system, as well as the poor support given to teachers in their daily contexts. I discuss this lack of support later in this chapter.

This thesis posits that this lack of shift could have been avoided, if the innovation (the policy, philosophy, and concept of inclusion) was effectively communicated. As indicated earlier, Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion suggests that communication is a vehicle through which information is created and shared with the constituencies to enable them to reach a common understanding of the new idea (Clarke, 1999). In cases where an innovation is poorly communicated, those expected to implement it are unable to reach a common understanding and to make the necessary paradigm shift. As a result, because of this poor communication about, and dissemination of, inclusive education, the stakeholders – particularly teachers – failed to embrace it, which results in a lack of change in the ways they think about teaching and how they practise it. The next section addresses this.

### 6.3.1.1 Understandings of the paradigm shift

Generally, inclusive education is seen as a complex form of reform in education. Within the South African context, while its complexity is acknowledged, it is also viewed as a complete paradigm shift (Naicker, 1999). While paradigms are said to give order and consistency to our lives, thereby enabling us to act appropriately at all times, they can be quite prescriptive, are seldom questioned, and can hide the reasons for our actions (Skritic, 1995). For example, the individual deficit or medical model has been incredibly dominant worldwide, and those of us who have worked within it have not questioned its assumptions of normality and issues of treatment (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996). South Africa has been no exception. To illustrate, the apartheid education system provided different teacher education programmes for regular and special education teachers. Accordingly, the medical paradigm influenced both regular and special education teachers, who believed that this paradigm worked in the learners' best interests. As a result, many teachers still think that unless they are trained in special education, they will not be capable of teaching all learners.

The above is evidenced by the fact that, five years after the release of EWP6, a large number of INSET teachers are still making enquiries about continuing and post-graduate programmes in special and remedial education. To this effect, one teacher who responded to the questionnaire declared that, "*LSEN are teachable. We can arrange or attend special workshops to enable us to deal with LSEN*" (Q31). Citing a lack of resources as a barrier to inclusion, another respondent stated, "[*We have*] no

*specialist facilities, and teachers not equipped*" (Q7). A comment that largely reflected the resilience of the medical model among the teachers came from a teacher who said:

*And if they can give us some medicine, how to help any stubborn... how to ease a stubbornness. She's got a negative attitude and the stubbornness. She's so stubborn!*

Some, blinded by unquestioned and unchanging practices and beliefs, did not think that inclusive education could be implemented in their schools. For example, one questionnaire respondent contended:

*There are too many issues and obstacles. Not fair on mainstream children as well as those with disabilities. (Q15)*

Others still believed that it is in the child's best interest to have separate educational provision that can address their specific needs. For example, in an interview with the Island View principal, he asserted that:

*I don't have severe confusions with it (policy), my biggest problem is we must not run away from the fact that we are all unique and different and I just believe that if we have children with specific needs, there must be places more suited to meeting those needs... I still believe that an institution where people can cater for their needs is far better because although they say in OBE you are up against yourself all the time, if you put a person like that in a classroom situation, they will be exposed. Once a child is exposed, that child gets withdrawn and that sort of thing.*

Further demonstrating the persistence of the deficit model and the focus on the learner as being problematic was one teacher's comment on parents' lack of acceptance of their children's problems:

*The most difficult problem that learners who have problems at school [is that] their parents don't want to come to school. You call him/her several times. He/she doesn't turn up because he/she knows that her child has a problem. But parents for those learners who are good, they come now and then.*



These comments reflect the unmistakable influence of the medical model. Obviously, it is not easy to change beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning. As Doyle (2002) argues, the best way to approach any school reform is through re-culturing, or the transformation of strongly embedded assumptions, values, and customs that encourage maintenance of the status quo (Burstein et al, 2004). Unfortunately, the three schools in this study and others in the district seemed to be experiencing difficulties in this regard too. An incidental conversation I had with a teacher from one of the pilot schools in the Greyville District (not included in this study) revealed the true magnitude of the task of changing focus from individuals and their shortcomings, to the social context in which learning takes place. When asked about the kinds of barriers learners experience at his school, his response revealed the fact that the paradigm shift and re-culturing warranted by EWP6 had not yet taken place:

*We have blind, autistic, hard of hearing and mentally handicapped learners... in fact, there are about seven types of disabilities among the 150 children that we admitted last year, and it is very difficult working without additional staff.*

On one hand, I empathised with him and wished him and his colleagues well in what they were doing. On the other hand, I was disappointed that although this teacher and his school had been part of a provincial pilot programme that had been running for over a year in the Greyville district, he still focused solely on learners' disabilities, and not on the barriers to learning caused by those disabilities. This suggested that the pilot programme might be failing in its efforts to prepare teachers for an inclusive education system. In an inclusive education system, the focus would be on barriers that both learners and teachers experience at school because these tend to be interrelated. These barriers would – in the case of this pilot school – include: inaccessibility to the

learning materials (for some learners due to their lack of proficiency in the LoLT, or because of specific disabilities); teachers' difficulties in differentiating the curriculum or identifying the learning needs of a changing learner population; the impact of HIV and AIDS, and poverty. This teacher's focus on the learners' disabilities simply indicates that shifting from the old and familiar to the new and unfamiliar is not easy, nor does it happen quickly.

The fact that a teacher who had been part of the provincial pilot for over 12 months, had still not changed his thinking about learners with disabilities and inclusion was alarming. For me, this suggested that as long as we continue to rely on the cascade model of training, and only involve one or two teachers from each school in once-off two-hour workshops, teachers cannot be expected to understand the nature and principles of inclusive education. And of course, this will affect the re-culturing and paradigm shift necessary for the implementation of EWP6. It is evident that other ways of communicating and training need to be developed and implemented.

The continued use of separate special classes at Island View is also indicative of how difficult it is to effect change in practice and to effect re-culturing in the school. On one hand, the principal acknowledged that it would not be difficult to dismantle the special classes in the school and absorb those learners into mainstream classes:

*...in other words the school was ready to include them, because you know, my children are not severely handicapped; they are only mildly handicapped as far as intellectual ability is concerned. So it is not a big problem for us to include those children in the mainstream... (Principal, Island View).*

According to him, this decision to include special class learners in the mainstream had been made two years earlier, but it had not yet been acted on. On the other hand, he was also aware that when learners were separated, labelling occurred, but the school found it difficult to change long established practices.

Frequently, the fact that some people stand to gain from the maintenance of the status quo remains the main stumbling block to changing beliefs and attitudes in the context of an innovation. For some, the amount of resistance that they put up is often linked to the anticipated loss (real or imagined) of status, resources, and other benefits, and not to the feasibility of the new idea. In the words of the Island View principal:

*...so, when we came back, obviously we first discussed it [EWP6] with our special class teachers; they were concerned about their positions, if they (learners) were to be absorbed in the mainstream; what was going to happen to them as teachers, so that was the first flaw.*

Teachers in the focus-group interviews at the three schools echoed similar concerns. For them the introduction of inclusive education would bring about an increase in their workloads, and due to the recent policy reforms – which also placed multiple demands on them – they felt that they would not be able to cope. This was exemplified by the following statement made by a teacher at Mangelengele School:

*...So I'm just thinking like if it's gonna be more work...It's gonna give us more work when there are learners who need special attention and there are special problems as well.*

In addition, it is always difficult to change your old, set patterns of behaviour into new patterns, even when the new behaviours may have potential benefits. It is even more

difficult when one is not sure what the benefits are, as was the case with the respondents in this study.

These findings suggest that the policy of inclusive education, and those policies preceding it, seemed to have had no effect on how the three schools and those who work in them thought about, and implemented teaching practices. Although the main study took place three years after EWP6 was adopted, it was clear that the diffusion of this innovation to the school level and the teachers had not taken place effectively. As a result – in these circles – particularly in the three schools participating in the study, the status quo remained and was not challenged. For example, at a nearby special school (not part of this study), learners were still admitted on the recommendation of the PGSES staff. They were kept on the waiting list and then on an appointed day, they would be assessed and their fate decided. This lengthy admission process is contrary to inclusion, because it means these children have not been to school since the year started. This is also contrary to SASA and EWP6 stipulations, which suggest that children – who have never been to school – should be encouraged to register in neighbourhood schools first, and only approach a special school later, if there is no support available for their needs. Specifically, at Island View, the maintenance of special classes was an indication that the school was neither prepared nor able to explore other possibilities of addressing challenges presented by the diverse learners they enrolled. Instead, the whole school continued to work as if EWP6 did not exist. Unfortunately, the failure to effect re-culturing in the school, and the perpetuation of the medical paradigm, makes it even harder to accept the value of the new policy or

programme. This failure to change practice reduces SASA and EWP6 to mere symbolic documents.

Even the Greyville PGSES unit was still being flooded by requests from mainstream schools to transfer learners to special schools. For example, on a day I had scheduled to meet two of their staff to observe training sessions, I found one of them preparing to call a special school to negotiate the admission of a learner. She indicated that she was nervous as she was expecting to be flooded with questions over why that learner was being referred to a special school:

*Special schools are screaming 'why are you sending so many children here? What happened to White Paper 6?' and they are right (Mrs Motala, PGSES).*

She also confided in me that she was reluctant to place a learner in a special school, especially if the learner was very young, because it would "close up all his chances in life". For me, this statement was very significant. I viewed it as an admission that the way in which special education is structured is not always beneficial to learners. Her statement confirmed my findings from an earlier study, which examined what happened in the lives of special education graduates after graduation from special schools (Ntombela, 1998). The study suggested that, although special schools were developed to give learners with special needs equal opportunities to learn and develop in a supportive environment, some learners were actually disadvantaged by this system. This is because the system tends to be overprotective and did not give them the skills to live independently, or the confidence to compete for jobs. This has been one of the arguments in favour of inclusive education: the fact that a separate system of special

education has failed to produce lasting positive results for disabled people (Florian, 1998).

After observing one of the special classes held at Island View, my assessment was that most of the learners in that class experienced language and communication barriers due to the use of English as the LoLT. The majority lacked grounding in a conceptual knowledge of English. Due to the fact that the majority of teachers are either English or Afrikaans first-language speakers, I concluded that instead of seeking strategies to respond to the needs of learners who do not have adequate command of the LoLT, the school had seen special classes as a 'quick fix' to this problem. In a way, the creation of special classes was easier for the school than confronting the fact that their teachers might lack the skills and willingness to deal with the needs of the newly integrated learner population (in terms of class, race, gender, religion, among others). For many of these learners, English is not their first language. Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh (2003) argue that in instances where learners are taught in another language, the environment is viewed as unfriendly, resulting in feelings of helplessness and a lack of self-pride because their mother tongue is devalued. In such cases, language actually plays a divisive role (ibid). The authors suggest that learners' mother tongues should be accepted and taught at school right up to university level, and in this way all languages can be authenticated (ibid). In our schools the starting point could be acknowledging that all learners come to school already competent in their mother tongue and use that as the LoLT. As a result, schools would be promoting the development of all local

languages and also validating them. This is not the case at present, and hence the exaggerated demand and status of English.

The fact that one of the special classes at the school, which comprises among the most vulnerable learners, was taught by an unqualified teacher was also difficult to comprehend. Learners in a special class have been identified as needing more support than the average learner, and for that reason one would expect them to be taught by someone who understands their educational needs and who can address those needs. This arrangement alluded to the value (or lack thereof) attached to learners who are seen as unsuccessful in the system. The school seemed to be communicating their belief that learners with special educational needs are uneducable, and that the teacher's role is simply to 'baby-sit' them until they are ready to be released to the outside world. This is in direct contrast to one of the central principles of inclusive education and SASA – that all learners can learn.

What concerned me the most was that in my observation of one of the special classes, I had noticed that those learners lacked competence in the LoLT, and would have expected them to be taught by someone knowledgeable about teaching English to second language learners. I communicated the need for special-class learners to be assisted in second language acquisition in a written report, which was given to the school as part of the process of verifying my findings with the participants of the study. However, no feedback was received from the school. A personal contact who works at this school recently informed me that special-class learners have since been

redistributed into mainstream classes. However, while this is a positive step, it is not clear what strategies are in place to assist those learners to gain competence in the LoLT, or how the school is supporting the teachers to respond to their learning needs.

Several factors emerged that explained the limited understanding and acceptance of inclusive education among the teachers and other stakeholders in the three schools. These included: ineffective dissemination of information about the innovation; inadequate professional development and training for teachers and others; lack of support for teachers and schools; and the multiplicity of policy reforms that have been introduced into the education system, placing multiple – often competing – demands on teachers and others. However, the overarching factor was the poor management of change and the inappropriate diffusion of the innovation at the school, district, provincial, and national levels. In particular, the concept of inclusive education has been poorly disseminated within and among the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and its subsystems. In addition, the multiplicity of policy reforms generated nationally, as well as ineffective professional development and training strategies, and limited support to prepare teachers for the new system, has negatively impacted on the teachers' understandings and experience of the new policy. These shortcomings are addressed in the next section.

### **6.3.1.2 Management of change**

In the previous chapters, I suggested that as we attempt to change the system of education, it is important to keep in mind that any change involves learning new ways



of doing things. Like all learning, this process can be confusing and painful, and takes time (UNESCO, 1993: 111-115). Therefore, the manner in which the proposed change from the old to the new is introduced, managed, and supported, is critical, as it influences stakeholders' understanding and acceptance of the innovation. The management of the change process and support given to all stakeholders will also determine how effective this policy is in improving the quality of education for all learners. If it is rushed, people will not develop a critical understanding of inclusive education and its implementation will be inadequate.

In **Chapter Three**, I indicated that policy generation occurs at a national level and that provinces are then expected to facilitate and monitor the implementation process (de Clercq, 2001). Naturally, the expectation is that the initiator of policies would – at the time of adoption – also provide information on how a new policy will be implemented. To this effect, one of the propositions advanced in **Chapter Four** of this study is that the success of inclusive education and its implementation depends on whether – in preparing the system for the implementation of the policy – the various stakeholders and sectors participate equally and appropriately at *all* stages of the diffusion of the innovation (Rogers, 2003).

#### **6.3.1.2.1 Information dissemination**

One of the three main research questions that informed this study was what strategies are used to manage the diffusion of EWP6 and inclusive education at district and school levels? In essence, the study investigated teachers' understandings and

experiences of inclusive education, which were analysed within the context of information dissemination about EWP6 and inclusive education to schools and teachers. Findings from this study suggest that in the case of EWP6, information about the policy and the concept of inclusion was not effectively disseminated between and within the various subsystems of the education system. In addition to inadequate information, communication about the innovation has tended to be uneven across the various levels (school, district and province) and divisions (e.g. curriculum, examination, etc.) of the education system. As a result, the diffusion process has privileged the Directorate of Inclusive Education and PGSES, to the exclusion of the other divisions or directorates in the initial stages of the implementation.

For instance, document analysis indicated that it was only a year after the release of EWP6 that the Directorate of Inclusive Education published the *Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education* (Department of Education, 2002). However, for unknown reasons, that draft was only circulated to districts late in 2004, three years after the policy statement was published.

In the previous chapters, I highlighted Jansen's (2001) concern about the absence of implementation strategies at the adoption stage, which has led him to conclude that in the South African education context, adopting policies is merely political symbolism. The fact that at the time of adoption, EWP6 was given a timeframe of 20 years for full implementation, and yet three years later not much seems to have been done towards realising that goal, somehow confirms the symbolism claim. However, because

substantial international donor funding has gone into the piloting phase of this policy, one is tempted to believe that the Ministry of Education will be bound to honour agreements made with those donors to continue the work that has been started.

According to the Provincial CES for Special Education, the provincial rollout plan was scheduled to start in October 2004 and was planned to be incremental, running concurrently with human resource development. Unfortunately, this period fell outside of data collection for this study, therefore I am not able to confirm in this thesis whether the rollout plan did ever materialise. However, informal conversations held with teachers in various school contexts point to the possibility that very little is happening in terms of human resource development, in relation to this policy. During data collection, a provincial pilot project in three districts of this province, namely: Greyville, Northlands, and Ephangweni districts, was being implemented. Lessons from this project were intended for use in informing the planned 20-year rollout in the province as a whole. I made a deliberate choice to omit the schools participating in the pilot project from the study as I assumed that such schools were already advanced in their understanding of inclusive education, having benefited from the attention piled upon them. However, in Section 6.2.1.1, I indicated that an incidental conversation held with a pilot school teacher highlighted that they were still stuck in the old paradigm, and that no shift had taken place in how they view learners experiencing barriers to learning and participation.

The Provincial CES also indicated that a major event on the provincial calendar had been a meeting held during October 2004, where all directorates were scheduled to discuss the implementation of inclusive education. During an earlier interview, she had unveiled the Inclusive Education Directorate's plan as follows:

*We are planning to convince all Directorates to be involved in the implementation of this system of education. If we succeed, they will then need to develop their own rollout plans for their sections.*

According to her, this collaboration was critical in the implementation process to correct the omission made by C2005 implementers, who had neglected to emphasise the inclusive approach advocated by the new curriculum. She added that as a result of the omission:

*Inclusive education has been considered as an 'add on'. Fortunately this error has been corrected by the Revised National Curriculum Statement facilitators.*

For me it was problematic that the other directorates of the provincial Department of Education had only been involved in the inclusion debate three years after the policy had been adopted. Why were they not part of the process when implementation and the pilots were planned? Effectively, this means that they were neither contributing to the pilot process, nor to the preparations for the general implementation of the policy in the province. The non-involvement of the other directorates seems short-sighted and runs against the spirit of inclusion. When taking into consideration that for the policy and the innovation to succeed in schools, the various arms (directorates) of the provincial Department of Education should not only understand and embrace it, they should also be well prepared – in terms of resources (human and material) – for its implementation.

As stated in the previous chapters, a central focus of EWP6 is to create a single, integrated system that includes all role players. Yet, from my interviews with the Provincial CES and others, it was not clear what would happen if the directorates were reluctant to buy into the innovation, nor was it evident how the directorates – if agreeable – would be trained and developed to a level where they would fully comprehend inclusion and be able to execute it within their constituencies. Such exclusion might impact negatively on teachers' understandings, acceptance, and implementation of the policy, and the support they need to develop and implement inclusive education programmes. This support is essential, if all stakeholders are to decide what role they will play in the development and implementation of inclusive education programmes; what kinds of training they will require to fulfil their roles; what to prioritise; and how their priorities and goals will cohere with those of other stakeholders and divisions in the province.

In particular, such knowledge and commitment is critical at a senior management level (at district and provincial levels), so that those who implement the policy at school level get the support they need, and those who are charged with providing it are willing and able to do so. Without a shared understanding of the policy and the concept of inclusion and its principles (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999), an incoherent system – characterised by different agendas and priorities and a divergence of practices and philosophies at different levels – will develop. This will of course send conflicting messages to the implementers of the innovation at the school level. In addition, inclusion – and the philosophy behind it – suggests a complex paradigm shift that cannot be grasped in one

or two meetings. Most importantly, inclusive practice cannot be developed in an exclusive environment. By using the systems theory, this thesis posits that the fact that these directorates (at provincial level) were only going to be included three years after the release of the policy, was a sign that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education had not yet embraced inclusive education's philosophy and principles: in other words, it had not yet been re-cultured.

The findings from this study also suggest that the poor communication of EWP6 did not only affect the provincial level, but was also felt within the Greyville district and the two schools that fall under it. For example, it emerged that the cascade model was the most commonly used form of information dissemination within the district. With one representative per school attending the training session, and then going back to share their insights with colleagues, the Department of Education seemed to rely on the word of mouth, albeit its untrustworthiness. For example, in an informal meeting with the district CES who is in charge of the PGSES, she suggested that the poor understanding of EWP6 and inclusive education was a result of the continued use of the cascade model of communication and training. During our conversation it was clear that communication between the district and province was poor:

**CES:** *The cascade model is not working, but we proudly proclaim that we have done this and that in our district, and all schools have been reached. What we actually mean is that one teacher per school attended.*

**Researcher:** *Then why do you continue to use it?*

**CES:** *What can we do? Each unit has four people. We really lack resources to reach everybody. Besides, in our reports we have indicated many times that the cascade model is not working but we have not been given alternatives, nothing has been said, so we carry on as usual. It all boils down to shortage of resources.*

This conversation suggests three things. First, that it is possible that no one at the provincial level reads the reports from districts, or – if they do – they do not take them seriously. Second, is the possibility that the provincial Department of Education does not have the necessary resources and skills to address the problems identified in the district reports. Finally, it suggests that the district tends to look to the province to address problems, and is not proactive in identifying, developing, and implementing the necessary strategies themselves to address the problems that confront their schools. On one hand, this culture of dependency is cause for concern because the people who are worst affected by problems expect leadership, support and solutions from top levels of management, instead of devising their own solutions. On the other hand, it is equally worrying that senior management personnel have created a system of reporting that they do not take seriously, and ultimately do not even have the necessary resources and skills to anticipate or address the problems that emerge.

An analysis of various documents from the provincial and district offices, as well as from the three schools, confirmed the poor communication and absence of information sharing within the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and its subsystems. In 2004, at the time of data collection for this study, other than EWP6 (which was not available in some of the schools), the only reference to inclusive education were two circulars inviting one or two school representatives to introductory workshops (see **Appendix H**). While the Ministry of Education had given itself a 20-year timeframe in which to fully

implement this policy, three years after its release, there were still no signs to verify the sincerity of their intention.

Interviews with the principals of the three schools in the study also suggested that they didn't all have copies of EWP6, and of those who did, some had not shared it with the rest of the school. For example, Island View had received a copy during their briefing workshop in 2002, but it had not been brought to the attention of the whole staff. According to the principal, it was discussed with the SMTs and the special class teachers, as they were the only ones affected by it. Mangelengele and Zungeza did not have copies, and this was probably because they had not yet been to inclusive education workshops. When I met the principal of Mangelengele for the first time, she had never even heard of inclusion, while the principal of Zungeza knew about it from her post-graduate studies. Along with Anderson of Victoria School and Woolworths of Durban (from the pilot study), the principal of Island View was in agreement with the principles of inclusive education, but felt that it would not be easy to implement due to resource shortages:

*My biggest problem is we must not run away from the fact that we are all unique and different and I just believe that if we have children with specific needs, there must be places more suitable to be able to meet those needs. Whereas if you look at a school like ours we have increasing numbers, huge classrooms, you know, if they brought a child that could not walk that uses a wheelchair we would not be able to accommodate that child because we do not have ramps, we don't have lifts, the child would not be able to fit in.*

The other principals (Mangelengele and Zungeza) only got copies when their teachers came back from attending the workshops. This took place at the tail end of my data collection session, so I did not hear what they did with those copies.



This study focused specifically on the way in which the new policy was being disseminated to teachers in the system. To this effect, the teachers in the focus-group interviews reported hearing about the policy and system of education from C2005 and OBE training workshops. For example, one teacher at Island View School reported the following:

*Because we went... for our OBE course which was in 2001...at that time we were told we will be planning how to implement the inclusive policy and then it was just an empty vein and then I started to forget about it...*

Another teacher from Zungeza Primary commented that:

*All of us have heard about it. Any person who attended curriculum 2005 they have heard about it. There was a slot in the workshop for inclusive education. You've heard about it if you were at the workshop. All of us attended curriculum 2005 workshop.*

Teachers from Island View Primary also reported hearing about the policy during workshop meetings. As one of them reported:

*Yes. I have (heard of the policy)...we went to the course of special needs last year and they discussed the policy.*

Unlike the other two schools, this school had – to a limited extent – engaged with the policy beyond the workshops:

*...it hasn't been discussed in detail but we have discussed inclusive education in the past. We haven't discussed the 'white paper' or gone through it. We have discussed the idea of inclusive and what it's all about...*

However, while they had heard about the policy and the concept, they also reported that very little direct communication or training had been provided by their district or the province, and that they still felt totally unprepared to implement it. At Mangelengele, a

senior member of staff (in terms of experience), highlighted the absence of consultation and/or communication between the different levels of the education system. Our interaction continued in this fashion:

**Mr Mdlalose:** *Mrs Ntombela, remind me again what your research is about.*

**Researcher:** *I'm looking at how teachers understand and implement or prepare to implement the policy of inclusion.*

**Mr Mdlalose:** *Oh, the inclusion of learners with disabilities in schools like this one? You want our opinions so that we can contribute to policy?*

**Researcher:** *It is policy already, yours is to run with it.*

**Mr Mdlalose:** *How can I run with something I did not create?*

**Researcher:** *You did, your Union approved of all the processes that led to its adoption.*

**Mr Mdlalose:** *We are teachers (hand gestures towards the classrooms), not Union staff. They should consult us if they are serious about change. We know whether the shoe pinches or fits well. We should be part of the changes that are introduced. I like change, Mrs Ntombela, but I want to know why we are changing and to what, with what benefits.*

The above excerpt illustrates that when the respondent heard the term "inclusion", he immediately referred to the mainstreaming of children with disabilities. This is particularly disturbing as the conversation took place only a few days after the school had received feedback from the school representative who had attended the district workshop on inclusion. Mr Mdlalose's comments were valid, but unfortunately he behaved differently in the presence of his colleagues, as I have already indicated on page 184.

Another reason for the poor dissemination and diffusion of the innovation among teachers was the multiplicity of policy reforms they had to deal with, all with different demands.

#### **6.3.1.2.2 Reform overload**

The systems theory, which is employed in this study, acknowledges that no system is totally independent, and to ensure its own survival, it has to interact with its subsystems as well as other parallel systems (Donald et al, 2002). In other words, the education system influences and is influenced by other systems such as political, social, and economic systems. Either directly or indirectly, changes in one system affect other systems. For example, within the socio-political systems, factors such as poverty, unemployment, crime, and HIV/AIDS tend to impact negatively on affected learners' access to education, as well as on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Within the education system, changes in one sector or division also affect the other units. In all three schools there seemed to be serious concerns over the number of changes taking place (e.g. C2005, and the revised NCS, among others). The teachers in the study felt that this contributed to a lack of understanding, acceptance, and implementation of the various policies, among them EWP6. According to the teachers, schools were trying to keep up with the many obligations and priorities the different policies were demanding of them, with little or no support from senior officials. It is, therefore, not surprising that the teachers felt overwhelmed. A teacher at Mangelengele Primary elaborated on this policy reform overload as follows:

*We are still struggling with OBE, so I think the department is giving us too much work... I think there was a course called remedial, it was meant for such learners who need special attention. And for us I can say it (EWP6) gives us more work because it's a challenge to accommodate these learners in whatever way.*

A related sentiment was that the introduced changes were not adding value to the task of teaching and learning in schools. As the Island View principal's comment illustrates:

*Too many innovations have generated too much paperwork. I spend more time doing paperwork than running the school.*

At Mangelengele, a teacher asserted:

*We are losing a lot of teaching time as a result of all the meetings we are asked to attend.*

The HoD at the latter school also explained that as a result of PPN, which is another policy reform, and the re-deployment of teachers who had been declared excess or made redundant, her department had had to change timetables three times in four months.

*We started with four teachers, then we got another one, now we have lost two. And you are expected to carry on as usual. It's very difficult.*

The school had also been affected in terms of support staff allocations, as the principal explained 'Our school no longer qualifies for an admin person under the new PPN.'

The side effects of this continuous change had even been felt provincially. As the Provincial CES pointed out:

*Your research is too early; we are still grappling with the conceptualisation of inclusive education. We are also in a transition, moving from one system to another, but the new systems are not in place yet.*

For me, this suggested that for teachers in the South African educational landscape, change was such a constant that they were finding it difficult to keep up. What was most significant, however, was that these teachers and managers did not initiate the changes, but were expected to react and respond to changes that were initiated by other people. This can be discouraging, especially when the contemplated change is so complex, as in the case of EWP6. As a result, there was no sense of ownership of the changes and, hence, no desire and/or capacity to transform. I concluded that constantly changing priorities or agendas (policy overload) work in opposition to the development of an inclusive schooling culture, because teachers never get to grips with the demands of one innovation before another one is introduced.

In addition to the shifting educational policy context in South Africa, is the constantly changing political context, which also tends to influence the extent to which an innovation is understood and embraced in schools. A case in point is the third general elections, which took place in April 2004, and brought about a different kind of reform in KwaZulu-Natal. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) had governed this province since 1994, but during these elections, the African National Congress (ANC) won and became the ruling party. It is widely accepted that political reforms tend to have an impact on what happens in education, and just before the elections, one HoD at Zungeza Primary speculated that, *"If the MEC is ANC, there will be lots of protests from NATU members"*. This was based on the belief that because the Natal African Teachers' Union (NATU) is used to being the "most listened to voice", the Union would try to make life difficult for the new (possibly ANC) Provincial Minister of Education. The ANC won, but fortunately

the HoD's speculation that NATU would make the province ungovernable was proved wrong.

The principal at the same school also had concerns, but of a different nature with regard to politics. She reported that as far back as 1999 she had been promised that additional classrooms would be built. Each year, she related, a different explanation was given for the non-delivery of these classrooms. Her concern was that, with the ANC coming into power in the province, the outcome of her petition would be politically decided:

*I phoned recently enquiring about when are they building those classrooms and was told the tender is not out yet. Now that there is going to be a new Minister (of Education) s/he may want things done differently, so we may have to wait much longer.*

In a democracy, these things should not happen, but because many South Africans were – for a long time – disenfranchised, it will take a while for many of us to understand that one has to live and let live and not withhold services from other people, simply because they belong to a different political camp. Nonetheless, unless properly managed, the policy reform overload that is currently confronting the education system will continue to impact negatively on the implementation of the very policies meant to address the imbalances of the apartheid past. Among these is the policy of inclusion in schools. The next section looks at how the different schools were responding to this policy.

### **6.3.2 The development of policy at a school level**

One indication that the diffusion of EWP6 and inclusive education had been poorly managed in the education system was the state and level of policy development in the three schools in this study. This study specifically investigated the extent to which the policies the three schools had developed, and were developing, reflected the principles of inclusive education. While the three schools were not yet implementing EWP6 due to delays in execution mentioned earlier (only those schools taking part in the district pilot programme were implementing), the fact that teacher training had begun through the cascade model – albeit inadequately – meant that there was an expectation that schools would engage with the policy in their daily activities. In addition, as discussed above, schools were expected to engage with a range of other changes that were being introduced, while the system was being restructured. One such change was the expectation that all schools should develop policies to govern their practice.

To illustrate, at the time of data collection for the study, two of the three principals indicated that they were attempting to engage in policy development, even though they possessed different levels of ability. It was, however, not possible to ascertain if those schools with developed policies were actually implementing them. Since I was interested in the policy of inclusive education and its training system, I could not help but notice that none of the schools had a policy on inclusion, nor did any of the policies they were developing reflect the principles and values of inclusive education. The absence of this policy at Island View was perplexing as one of the teachers at the school had attended an “awareness” workshop in 2002. Moreover, the school already

had a copy of this document and, during the focus-group interview, it was indicated that the concept of inclusive education had been discussed at a meeting. However, in the case of Mangelengele and Zungeza, the fact that teachers from these schools had not yet attended briefing workshops on this policy when document analysis was conducted, possibly explains its absence.

Two of the principals were concerned about policy development in their schools, but the Mangelengele principal was really troubled because she realised how much she was lagging behind in terms of this prerequisite. It appeared that there were no guidelines on how to achieve this, nor was there an invitation to any workshop where they would be “taught or shown” how it could be done. To me this suggests that one of the functions of the School Governing Bodies (hereafter referred to as SGBs) namely, policy development, had shifted solely to the principals and their staff, due to a lack of training. According to SASA, representatives of parents, communities, teachers and learners were supposed to form SGBs. This body is responsible for the adoption of a constitution, the development of a mission statement, and the adoption of a code of conduct. If SGBs had been well prepared for the task of developing policies, they would have done so, and principals – as members – would have gained considerable experience from this exercise. This expertise could then have been applied to the development of other policies.

My interactions with teachers in other districts in the province indicate that workshops focusing on assisting schools to develop such policies had in fact been provided. It is



possible that similar workshops had been conducted in the Greyville district, but that teachers from these schools had either missed them, or had not been informed about them. Consequently, it was unrealistic to expect schools to know how to develop such important documents when they were not given any training or support to do so. It is also possible that Island View excelled in this exercise because they had learnt this important skill in workshops organised for SGBs in the Shelley Beach district. Pather's (2003) observation that most reforms fail because it is assumed that teachers can respond to their objectives when, in fact, they are not capable or are unwilling to, seems to be relevant in this case.

Since, to my knowledge, schools in the Greyville district had only attended one workshop on inclusion, and some had attended none at all, they were not implementing or even preparing to implement inclusion. As a result, schools continued about their business as usual, and I assumed that there was no change at all in the lives of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Similarly, I was sceptical that learners' experiences would be improved by the numerous policies that the schools were expected to develop.

At the deeper level of policy generation, I was not convinced that teachers understood the significance and purpose of policies. At Mangelengele, the principal indicated that when she assumed principalship, there were no school policies available at this school. She had since approached another principal in a similar position to set aside a day when they could work on the required documents. It is not clear how this exercise would

have been carried out, and whether or not they would have developed joint policies or assisted each other in developing individual school policies. One incident that highlighted my experience of the futility of policy development at a school level was when I heard reports of neighbouring schools pirating policies from Zungeza Primary. It became clear that teachers (and their schools) misunderstood the purpose of policies. I had serious doubts that teachers' practices would change in line with such policies, whether they were developed within the schools, or were implemented by an external source. This lack of clarity about the value of policies is, apparently, not unique to South Africa. Writing from an English perspective, Evans, Lunt, Wedell, and Dyson (1999) observed that sometimes school policies are treated as documents that stay in files to be produced on demand for inspections. In such cases, they have no impact on the culture or practice of schools.

In my mind I questioned the value of this frantic generation of policies. To me there was no obvious link between policy development and inclusion, but I assumed that if schools developed admission policies, these would have to be in line with the Constitution and the South African Schools Act of 1996. Essentially, they could not be discriminatory. The same applied to disciplinary policies: schools cannot subject learners to disciplinary measures that are degrading, harmful or exclusionary. I felt it would be useful for preparing the ground for the development of inclusion policies. However, without proper information, guidance, training, and support for this task, schools are bound to fail in their efforts to develop appropriate policies and programmes. And – as a result – their teaching practices and philosophies on learning will not change.

Some of the strategies identified by Burstein et al (2004) to support reforms include: preparing workers for change; planning for change; building commitment to change; and providing support that promotes and maintains change. It is not a coincidence that all four involve the development of personnel and the system to handle the reform agenda. Taylor et al (2003) add their voices to this, but also place emphasis on building the capacity of office-based personnel to guide and monitor changes, until sustainable levels are reached. In other words, those in senior positions also need to be developed before they can assist teachers and others in the schools to understand, and share in, the vision for the innovation. To this end, the nature and extent of teacher professional development and support for the implementation of the policy is crucial. This issue is addressed in the next section.

### **6.3.3 The professional development of teachers and schools**

The third research question this study aimed to answer was what support is available to teachers and schools to enable them to understand and embrace the new inclusive education and training system? This thesis proposes that the nature and quality of the teachers' and other stakeholders' experiences of the policy would be greatly influenced by both the quantity and quality of support and training available to them within schools and districts. Findings from the study suggest that teachers in the three schools (and by implication, in the district) received limited and varied support and training in preparation for the development of an inclusive education system. In addition, other stakeholders in the other subsystems of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education

also received inadequate training and support. As a result, they were not able to provide each other, as well as those in their charge, with the support they needed.

One form of support that is critical to developing inclusive practice in schools is the professional development of those already working for the Ministry of Education (e.g. INSET teachers and other education officials), and thoroughly preparing those planning to work there (pre-service teachers). This study focused on the former. Findings from the study suggest that INSET was a concern at the different levels of the system, from teachers to officials at provincial level. To illustrate, in the Draft Guidelines document (Department of Education, 2002), the Directorate for Inclusive Education acknowledges that:

...the primary demands of an inclusive system will necessitate a major focus, at least initially, on the training, re-training and re-orientation of all personnel. Training will be provided at various levels and by various providers and will involve both in-service training (INSET) and pre-service training (Department of Education, 2002:14).

The magnitude of the task at hand was also highlighted by Surty, the national Deputy Minister of Education. In his speech at a workshop entitled Equalisation of Opportunities for Disabled Persons in Education, he highlighted how the dual system (regular and special education) that prevailed in South Africa had entrenched two different understandings of teaching and learning. He then acknowledged that one of the priorities in developing an inclusive system is uprooting the notions that have – over many years – excluded many children from benefiting from ordinary education provision (Surty, 2004). However, to achieve this and to unlearn the principles and practices of the deficit model, teachers would need to be retrained, encouraged, and supported to find new ways of dealing with diversity in their classrooms.

At the provincial level, the Inclusive Education Directorate was also greatly concerned that teachers lacked expertise in the new dispensation. However, there was no indication as to how and when these skills would be developed among teachers, and who would train them. In addition, while the province acknowledged the critical role teachers play in education, there was also the fear that they might have unrealistic expectations regarding skills acquisition. For example, in an interview with the Provincial CES of the Inclusive Education Directorate, she contended that:

*Teachers are key role players in inclusion but without skills, they cannot do it. There is some concern within the Directorate that teachers may expect to get these skills overnight.*

This statement acknowledges that unlearning the old and learning the new is not going to happen quickly. If this process is rushed, there is a great danger of what Slee (2001) refers to as the transference of special-education thinking and behaviour to the inclusive schooling context. This will of course be a very unfortunate route to follow as teachers' understanding of diversity will remain very superficial, and many learners will continue to be marginalized, and even excluded from our classrooms.

At the time of this study, there were no new developments in the Shelley Beach district, since they had completed their advocacy and awareness training in 2002. However, the Greyville district – led by the PGSES – seemed to be working tirelessly to create awareness about the new policy in all their schools. In contrast to what was happening at the provincial level, the district office was seriously attempting to engage with the

policy. This was evidenced by the involvement of all directorates within this district in workshops on this policy statement, and the development of a District-based Support Team in accordance with EWP6. Most importantly, the District Director was visibly supportive of the PGSES' endeavours and of inclusive education in general.

I had several concerns as I observed how this district engaged with the policy statement. First, I noted that it was always the PGSES team that was taking the lead: not once did I see members from other Directorates take charge. Second, the use of the cascade model was negatively impacting on the potential progress this district could be making in preparing for an inclusive education system. Those who attend courses, or what is referred to as 'workshops', were not provided with any notes except a copy of the slide presentation. However, they were expected to convey the message to their colleagues, who then get a third-hand version of the topic discussed. The information relayed by those teachers who attended the workshop to colleagues is often distorted, and because the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education does not conduct follow-up training, these distortions remain uncorrected. Mashinini and Smith (1995) are critical of this method for the same reasons, but – most of all – they are concerned about quality assurance issues as training filters down from the teachers who attend the courses to the other teachers at the schools. In schools where no opportunities are provided to report back after attending such training, it means that the issues that were discussed remain the exclusive knowledge of the person/s who attended the workshops.

The inadequacy of the training provided for teachers in the district can also be attributed to the duration of each individual workshop session. For example, it is impossible that a two-hour workshop can be an effective method of dealing with a complex topic such as inclusion. Mashinini and Smith (1995) refer to this method of training as the occasional workshop method, which is tutor-centred and has a predetermined agenda. The limitation of this method, they argue, is the fact that it is not possible to achieve an in-depth understanding of a topic in such a short time. The ineffectiveness of the cascade model was evident at Mangelengele Primary, where the teacher who attended the workshop had totally misunderstood the concept and principles of inclusive education. During a focus-group interview, the same teacher explained that after attending the district meeting she reported back to the teachers at her school, and they were upset when she explained that the department was going to introduce inclusion in 2020. The district officials may have marked this school as having received training in inclusion, but had it really?

When people have not directly interacted with the policy statement themselves, it is to be expected that there will be gaps in understanding, or even confusion. To obviate this, Ball (2000: 1833) suggests that there should be “key mediators of policy in any setting who are relied upon by others to relate policy to context or to gatekeepers.” In organisations, Rogers (2003) refers to these mediators as innovation champions – people who are skilled in dealing with other people and who have good persuasion and negotiation skills. In the case of education, these key people would be based in districts or in circuits where they have direct access to schools. However, since the KwaZulu-

Natal Department of Education does not seem to have a culture of following up on meetings, or visiting schools to see if people have a shared understanding of inclusion, a different method of delivery will be needed, or a different culture of teacher and school development will have to emerge. This culture will need to be characterised by debate and two-way communication to enable these champions to persuade others to buy into innovations.

For Burstein et al (2004), a systematic and intensive training programme is required to develop teachers' confidence and competence. The authors suggest that this training should "include research-based best practices in inclusive schools" (ibid: 105). They also assert that change occurs through ongoing and participatory staff development. According to them, it takes a long time to train as a teacher, and after several years' experience in the classroom, teachers get set in their ways of thinking about teaching and learning. It is, therefore, important that training takes place over time, and that it is both theoretical and practical. After reading a case study, one teacher said '*What have we to do with this because we should refer such cases to social workers?*' This reaction came a few minutes after the same teachers had impressed the facilitator with their "shift in thinking" about barriers to learning. It was obvious that this teacher had never heard about inclusion and did not understand why their time was being wasted when they could refer such cases. I could only imagine what she would report back to the teachers at her school about inclusive education, and I was deeply concerned. For me, this incident highlighted the need for continuing professional development around inclusive education, to ensure that teachers are supported as they learn new ways of



facilitating learning. The organiser did not hear the comment, so this teacher received no further assistance to correct her misconceptions and help her to understand why these cases were of importance.

During workshop sessions, there was no mechanism to identify teachers who were struggling to understand the training content. As a result, teachers – such as the one mentioned above – did not get any clarification on issues that were confusing. This period could have been used to support teachers in making that pivotal shift in thinking and to raise awareness about the availability of support at different levels. In those workshops I did not see any differentiation in the training given to special school and regular school teachers, although this could have changed later. Even though certain elements of the training may overlap, if the former are being prepared to serve as part of DBSTs – who provide resources and support to teachers in full-service schools and ordinary schools – they need different skills from teachers who will be working in non-resource schools.

As indicated in **Chapter Five**, as part of data collection, I attended and observed several training workshops that were organised in the district as part of the advocacy and training programmes, in preparation for the implementation of EWP6 in schools. My observations suggested several problems in the design and delivery of the workshops; they also suggested a lack of re-culturing within the district. One of the problems is that inclusion is a complex system of education, and teachers should be allowed sufficient time to engage with the policy to facilitate understanding. This is a crucial aspect that

professional development programmes should take cognisance of. In line with the social constructionist theory, each individual needs opportunities to make sense of new information. In addition, change takes time and this was not reflected in the design and implementation of these two-hour workshops. Another problem for me was that the word 'workshop' seemed like a misnomer, as the delegates participated very little. It would have been more appropriate to call these 'workshops' lectures. For example, in several of the workshops, too much theoretical information was crammed into afternoon sessions, and this is problematic when communicating and disseminating a very complex concept.

A further problem was linked to the fact that inclusion is concerned with improving the various features of the school system that prevent learners from learning effectively. Contrary to this, in the workshops I observed, teachers were not asked to reflect on their current practice, or on the nature of the contexts in which they were teaching (and learning). For example, they could have been asked the following questions: how they teach and why they teach in that way; which learners were excluded; why they were excluded; and how could they be included. They could also have been asked to think about their own learning in their work contexts, how this is supported or not supported, and how they could improve each other's learning. If inclusive education demands a different way of understanding and practicing teaching and viewing learning, then teachers need to be challenged to make room for improvement in their current practice in order to transform.

I also found that some of the organisers' expectations were unrealistic. In one of the workshops, the facilitator got excited that she could see a "shift in thinking" when teachers gave her examples of barriers that learners are likely to encounter in the classroom. While I recognise that the teachers were quickly learning the correct terminology, I was worried that the change was only superficial, and that the true transformation in their beliefs and values – that would significantly change their ways of teaching in the school and classroom – had not really occurred. A shift in discourse cannot be equated to an altered way of thinking, which is a much deeper phenomenon, involving one's beliefs and values as displayed by one's practice (pedagogy).

The manner in which schools were selected for the pilot programme was also problematic. My investigations in the district suggested that the incorporation of schools into the pilot programme had not involved any feasibility study or establishment of commitment from the said schools. Schools had simply been incorporated into, and mandated to participate in, the pilot. This is contrary to the notion that a pilot project is a research opportunity, and – like any research project – schools have a right to consent to participate. Those who take part have a right to know what is involved, especially the demands that participation will make on them, before they commit themselves to such a project. Without this commitment, there is a high risk of non-acceptance and non-implementation, and ultimately failure of the policy as a whole.

The final problem was related to the professionalism and commitment (or lack thereof) of the innovation champions (Rogers, 2003). This thesis posits that without commitment

from the agents of change, any innovation is bound to fail. To illustrate, at one of the grade R teachers' workshops (on the early identification of barriers to learning), two officials carried on chatting at the back of the room and before long, some of the participants started having their own private conversations. The unprofessional behaviour of those officials had sent a clear message that there was no perceived value in what was occurring in the workshops.

All these problems made me question whether the objectives of these workshops had been achieved at all. However, since the *Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education* only came out in the second half of 2004, I found the proactive attitude of the Greyville district impressive. In my mind, the fact that something was started before the province had tabled its plans on how this policy would be implemented, was a sign of concern and commitment. The district, especially the PGSES, should be applauded for this.

At school level, teachers in the three schools indicated that they had participated in staff development programmes. However, there were indications that these focused on what the department wanted done, instead of what teachers and their schools needed. As a result, as the discussion below will illustrate, in all three schools in the study there was a strong sense that teachers and schools were subjects within a changing environment. There seemed to be no sense of ownership of the reforms taking place, nor of any urgency in addressing issues that face schools and teachers in their classrooms.

In **Chapter Two**, I elaborated on how educational provision has entrenched the belief that learners who do not benefit from mainstream teaching belong in special classes or special schools, and that specialist teachers in these schools will know how to address their educational needs. The teachers in this study bemoaned the fact that they did not have adequate support and training for the new roles implicit in the recent education policy changes, including EWP6. Due to this lack of support, teachers in two of the schools indicated that they wished that they had special classes in their school. To illustrate, one teacher at Mangelengele commented:

*And if things were right, even us we will be having special classes (sic), but at the moment, we have to teach them together.*

This sentiment was echoed by a teacher at Zungeza Primary, albeit for a different reason:

*Another thing we had thought of...if the department can provide this school with a different classroom where such learners can learn practical subjects, maybe woodwork or something, so as to help them when they go out.*

These comments suggest that the teachers from the two schools felt overwhelmed by the demands these learners made on them and felt that separate provision would have been a solution to the problem. The assumption was that in such classes, someone else – a specially trained teacher – would take responsibility for these learners' learning. It is normal to want to shift responsibility when people feel overwhelmed by the demands placed on them. But, I do not doubt that these teachers would feel differently, if they had been offered skills to identify and address barriers to learning, and received support in their endeavours. Unfortunately – at the time – training was inadequate and support not forthcoming.

The literature reviewed in this dissertation also indicated that the existence of two streams in initial teacher training – both regular and special – has also entrenched the thinking that some children can only be taught by teachers who have undergone specialist training. This way of thinking made specialist education inscrutable, and implied that only a few select teachers possessed the knowledge and skills necessary to implement it. However, within the new system of education, teachers are expected to address the learning needs of all learners. This paradigm is meant to entrench the rights of all children to be educated together in their neighbourhood, irrespective of their differences, and expects teachers to take full responsibility for educating all their learners (Rose, 2001). According to Rose (2001), working within this paradigm makes the development of teachers' skills and confidence critical, and those charged with pre-service and in-service training need to support teachers so that they are confident to address a diversity of educational needs.

The teachers also recognised the need for professional development and training to prepare for the implementation of EWP6. The following comment made by a teacher from Island View highlights the complexity and difficulty involved in teaching learners with diverse educational needs in the same classroom:

*Yah, I just think... seeing... working with these children that are in the mainstream classes, it's very difficult because you go back many times... oh we do not have the skills to work with them. Definitely schools do not know how, but we should be trained to work with these children and to accommodate them as far as possible, I do think that it can work if there was another person in class...*

The teachers felt that inclusive education could work, if the government fulfilled certain obligations outlined in the policy document:

*If they do keep to what they are saying in that document, they are saying they'll train teachers, they are saying they will reduce class sizes, they are saying a lot of things. They are making a lot of promises.*

The adoption of a new policy, however, does not necessarily mean that teachers will immediately abandon their old ways of practice. Instead, there may be reluctance to try out something new under the pretext of 'why change what works?' An example of this is the teacher who questioned why they were asked to deal with cases that clearly meant for social workers. If this type of thinking and attitude goes unchallenged, the result may be scepticism about the innovation and poor implementation of it. Sergiovanni (1991: 263) highlights the need for adequate training and support for the intended implementers of an innovation (e.g. EWP6) using an expectancy theory to explain sources of teachers' motivation to adopt reforms. He maintains that motivation is determined by their answers to the following questions:

1. Do I know what needs to be accomplished?
2. Are the benefits of accomplishment important to me and desired by me?
3. Do I have a clear idea of exactly what it is that I need to do to accomplish this?
4. Should I attempt this and will I be successful?

According to him, if teachers answer any of these questions negatively, they will not be inspired to take part in the proposed reforms. To combat this, he proposes that teachers should know what is to be done, how it will be done, and what they will be doing differently. This process is what he refers to as the workflow focus. In addition, teachers should have the necessary tools, ongoing training, assistance, supervision and

evaluation so that their attempts to implement the proposed changes are successful (Sergiovanni, 1991: 262). As policy implementers, they need to clearly understand the purpose and value of the reform before they commit to it (Burstein et al, 2004). They also need to be confident in their ability to do what the reform demands.

This study's findings suggest that the teachers from the three schools would answer all the questions negatively. For example, in all three schools, the teachers felt that they were not trained to deliver inclusive education. The fact that teachers feel so unprepared will only work against the development of a common vision, and will be a breeding ground for negative attitudes. In one focus- group interview at Mangelengele, a teacher commented:

*I can say it's a mixture of feelings because as we are trying to deal with what we call normal kids. So when we are faced with those learners that need special attention you know there is that fear; how will you be teaching them; will you be able to meet their needs...*

Another added:

*... you usually know that there is a problem but you don't know exactly how to deal with that problem because you're not equipped to deal with it.*

Some of the teachers felt that even the ability to identify learners who need assistance is something that not every teacher has, as this Zungeza teacher asserted:

*I think there should be a programme. With some other people I think they might not notice that this child has a problem, and the child will be lost... If you notice, you may try to devise some methods of helping that child. But I think there should be a formal mechanism where the children are identified before they enter the class.*



At Zungeza, in particular, the teachers indicated that they tended to rely heavily on those among them who showed expertise in addressing learners' needs. They acknowledged that this puts pressure on a handful of individuals, but it was a problem that could be corrected. As one of them explained in the focus-group interview:

*I think exchanging of learners from one teacher to another it's because we are not trained (sic). After we are trained I think all the educators will be capable to help children in their own classes. Those educators who are capable, it's from experience... or in their ability (sic).*

Support is also a condition that is necessary for the success of an innovation. This is discussed in the next section.

#### **6.3.4 Support for teachers and schools**

As stated above, for any innovation to succeed – in addition to being trained or retrained for the change – those who are expected to implement the change need to be supported (in terms of resources, information, and continuous evaluation). In the case of EWP6, this study examined the extent to which the Greyville district, as well as the schools themselves, mobilised support for the teachers who are expected to be the main implementers of this policy. My analysis of the support available to teachers and schools was based on the notion that an innovation can only succeed, if the school environment in which it is implemented is supportive of its principles and expectations. It is counterproductive to assume that teachers will be trained adequately to implement the new system of education (from what they learn in the workshops, which are removed from their teaching contexts), when in reality the teaching environment

remains unchanged and unreceptive. The study examined the availability of support at two levels of the system: the school and district.

#### **6.3.4.1 Support at district level**

Findings from this study suggest that teachers and principals from the three schools found the support they were receiving from the two districts inadequate in relation to EWP6 and inclusive education. In such a system, teachers would (ideally) be supported by their colleagues in the form of the Institutional-based Support Team (IBST), and the DBST would be the most senior support structure to consult in this chain. What emerged from the findings was that there was no common understanding of where and how to access support, or of who should give it. On one hand, the PGSES staff is district based, and according to a respondent at the Greyville district office, each circuit has a designated person who liaises with schools and the PGSES. On the other hand, none of the teachers and principals in this study knew of such a person in their circuits. This, in conjunction with the numerous changes that were reported to be taking place, made it difficult for schools to know where to go to for assistance. As referred to in the sections above, the policy reform overload was creating confusion regarding procedures. The following excerpt from an interview with the Island View principal illustrates this:

**Researcher:** *Which office do you approach the most for advice?*

**Principal:** *What I must admit is that we hardly ever deal with them (PGSES).*

Island View had, according to the principal, resorted to using a private psychologist as they had no confidence in the support programme that the district provided. This was confirmed in the focus-group interview held with teachers from this school. One teacher in the group declared:

*What we usually do is that if we have a problem we discuss it with the deputy and each other... and see if we can find a solution... then we try everybody who can help... Then we call in the parents and we fill in an interview form where we keep all the details and then wait until he (psychologist) comes and we discuss with him and then he will decide if the learner needs to be assessed or he guides us as to what we need to do with the child.*

Unfortunately, not all schools have access to private psychologists, and even if they do (like Island View), the fees they charge may be too much for some parents, which puts the service out of reach for many learners. Schools such as Zungeza and Mangelengele had already incorporated learners with special educational needs. This occurred by default, as a result of the unavailability of special schools in their areas. The schools had to include the learners with none of the special training and support that more privileged schools, such as Island View, enjoyed. However, the absence of support from the district made them wish for special classes where relevant provision would be available.

In addition, the protocol for dealing with district and provincial officials has also made it difficult for the schools to access prompt service because – as the teachers in this and other studies have claimed – people often got into trouble, if they did not observe the correct procedures. In another study, an interview with a principal who seemed to understand the system very well illustrates this rigidity:

**Researcher:** *Why do you always approach the circuit office?*

**Principal:** *It is protocol, if we have a problem or anything we need, we start with them.*

**Researcher:** *Do they give your problems the attention they deserve?*

**Principal:** *There are a lot of problems because sometimes when we want to inform them they are not there, even if you submit something, those things get lost.*

**Researcher:** *You are saying although they don't respond but you still have to consult them?*

**Principal:** *We still have to consult them because if we don't we'll be in trouble.*

Obviously, such bureaucratic procedures do not improve efficiency. The principal in the above excerpt appeared resigned to working with this unsupportive and inefficient office (which happened to be in the Greyville district), simply because if she did not, there would be serious repercussions. This prevailing culture of fear will not support the development of an inclusive system and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. In inclusive education, schools will require substantial support on many fronts, and should not be paralysed by fear of retribution when seeking that support. A child's future cannot and should not be compromised by our religious observance of protocol that does not deliver results.

For some schools, their experiences of working with the PGSES suggested that the designated persons in the PGSES were often so overwhelmed with their own workload or the quantity of support that schools demanded that they were unreachable, or simply unable to support schools and their teachers. The Island View principal captured this well:

*We still believe that, that child needs to be evaluated so we have referred this case to them (PGSES) up to now they said they have received nothing (files)... And I must say this was about two months ago and the child is still displaying behaviour problems.*

A similar problem seemed to have been experienced at Zungeza, as evidenced by this declaration by a teacher in the focus-group interview:

*At that time she (learner) was in foundation phase. They had to pay R235 cash (to get psychological assessment) so she couldn't afford it. So we left it to Sheila (PGSES personnel) because we had the records. She has taken our records. She has gone now, but the problem is still here.*

There seemed to be very little confidence in the district's ability (including the PGSES) to support schools in addressing their challenges. During an informal discussion between the Zungeza principal and a grade 2 teacher, the teacher complained that her learners' performances were not up to standard. The principal explained that this occurred because learners had been admitted late, and had not been through pre-primary school or grade R before being admitted to grade 1. She indicated that PGSES had always been willing to come and help in such cases, but the reason they stopped calling them was because "*teachers got tired of their theories, they want practical skills*". At the same school, another teacher felt that the PGSES did not improve their ability to understand or work with children who experienced barriers to learning. Instead of using PGSES, the school had established several committees that examined barriers to learning and attempted to find solutions.

As the following excerpt illustrates, this discussion resurfaced during the focus-group interview at the school:

**Teacher 1:** *Mrs Dlamini is the one who used to keep records of all such children (who experience barriers to learning). And she made contact with the department and we found that it's not easy to get help.*

**Teacher 2:** *We just collect our information. If she can come here now, we'd give her all the information.... We have piles and piles of information on our learners who need help. But if she comes, I will say look at our problems and she will say, oh! So much! Okay, I will help you, and she'll never come back.*

At the school level, there were also feelings of dejection at the inconsistency and lack of available support. As the Zungeza Primary principal declared:

*There have been many changes so there has not been any stability especially in the governance unit, which is the one that is helping us most. And others, we are meeting them for the first time, things keeps on changing like this, we had somebody last year and this year we will have somebody else, and they say different things. So we depend upon ourselves, upon the members of staff rather than going there because you get different information all the time.*

This suggested to me that the boundaries of the different subsystems were not permeable; that some voices were not heard in the wider contexts; and that those with the power to make decisions made promises that they had no intention of keeping, perhaps because they were overwhelmed by demands. Nonetheless, the inconsistency in the availability of support is not conducive to effective teaching and learning, and should not be tolerated. In fact, it is these inconsistencies that justify the adoption of an inclusive system of education, which is appropriate in our context because this system seeks to create support structures at different levels of the system to ensure that all learners (and teachers) are able to access support for their learning. In the absence of assistance, or when faced with inadequate support from districts, how were schools supporting teachers?

#### 6.3.4.2 Support at school level

The extent to which the three schools mobilised support to address the learning needs of diverse learners in the schools was also explored in this study. This investigation was based on the belief that a supportive learning environment, where teachers have the necessary skills and resources (human and material) to carry out their day-to-day activities, would produce the necessary resilience for them to embrace and ultimately implement an inclusive education system. To this effect, in terms of classroom-based support, all the teachers who participated in the study (questionnaire and focus-group interview respondents) reported making efforts to cater for learner differences in their lessons, and all attempted to assist learners who experienced difficulties within the classroom. In addition, some reported relying on each other for assistance in cases where they felt this was necessary. These results confirmed the findings of an earlier study I had conducted, which suggested that mainstream teachers do attempt to address barriers to learning in class (Ntombela, 1993).

In the present study, the following excerpt from a focus-group interview at Zungeza Primary illustrates this support:

**Teacher 1:** *One other thing that we do is that we tell the intelligent one to help the slow ones in a group while they are working. Then they also help.*

**Researcher:** *Do you tell them that I want you to help so and so because he or she is slow? What sort of things do you say to encourage them to support each other?*

**Teacher 2:** *Sometimes they know that this one is slow. They know without the teacher telling them. They just know. Then they are capable to help the one who is not good, and you just encourage them if you notice it.*

It was pleasing to hear that peer tutoring was encouraged to assist learners who experienced barriers to learning. After reviewing the questionnaires, it also emerged that learners who struggled with class work did get some assistance in the classroom, even though most teachers (in the focus-group interviews) felt that they needed more skills to be effective in responding to the learners' problems. Other teachers indicated that they do attempt to make the curriculum accessible by monitoring the tasks, activities, or programmes that are assigned to the learners. For example, a teacher at Mangelengele declared:

*What I normally do although I must say it's taxing on my style of teaching, I used to give him/her work that he will do and then I'll ask assistance from the parent. When I do follow up I find that the parent sometimes doesn't help. And then I try in the classroom situation. I try to mix the work, where that child will be able to achieve according to her own ability*

Some teachers preferred to work closely with parents for support. One teacher at Zungeza Primary felt very strongly about this and said it was critical to the success of the innovation. During a focus-group interview, she asserted:

*...and involve the parent. The parent must accept that the child has a problem. If the parents don't accept, it will be difficult for the teacher to work on her own, because if you work on your own everyday and when you involve the parent, the parent will tell you that, "oh my child is having... she's very sharp, she's this and this and this at home"... But she comes to school then you find this child has got this problem. So if the parents don't comply with you, you have a problem. So it's not easy to help the child with a problem. So the parent must work together with you.*

I was inclined to agree. Generally, parents are recognised as primary caregivers, and as such should have their children's best interests at heart. In addition, the participation of parents (as well as learners and communities) has been entrenched in SASA (DoE, 1996) wherein schools are mandated to involve learners and their parents and/or



communities in school matters. Generally, teachers in the three schools reported that parents were used as a resource to support learners when they experienced difficulties, even though the outcomes were seldom what the teachers expected. Thus, at Zungeza – for example – it was parental concern and involvement that made the school review its curriculum. This evaluation led to the adoption of the SMILE<sup>5</sup> programme, which sought to increase learners' competence in the LoLT. Parents also asked for the introduction of computers at this school. It is encouraging when parents show concern over curriculum matters, and want to see improvements in their children's learning.

At Island View, parents were only invited to fill in the interview form, which is used for referral to the psychologists (see previous section). This is not the kind of collaboration envisaged by inclusive education. In **Chapter Two**, I argued that education does not exist in a vacuum, but that it co-exists with other systems (e.g. parents), which tend to interrelate and influence one another. To educate children successfully, it is necessary for schools to work closely with such systems. However, it is important for teachers to remember that not all learners come from home environments that are supportive. Indigent families struggle for survival and may not see the value in supporting their children's education. They may also not have the capacity to do so. Sometimes parents are illiterate and do not understand the LoLT, while at other times the ravages of HIV/AIDS, poverty, unemployment, and other social ills take their toll. Parents are thus rendered ineffectual in their roles as support systems for their children's schooling, and are often unable to assist their children with schoolwork.

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<sup>5</sup> St Mary's Interactive Learning Experience.

That is why Donald et al (2002) suggest that teachers need to establish the extent to which parents have the time to help with activities that their children have to complete, and understand the rationale for them. This will help to establish a sense of partnership between teachers and parents, and teachers will not have unrealistic expectations of parents. Despite the large numbers of children that each teacher dealt with in the three schools, and the demands placed on their time by numerous innovations, the fact that teachers in these schools still managed to recognise the need for parental involvement was encouraging, and certainly a sign that some culture of support already exists in most classrooms. This is definitely a factor that inclusive education should build on.

In addition to general staff meetings, teachers in the three schools reported that they had learning area and grade meetings to plan, and they also had to deal with problems that emerged within the context of their daily teaching activities. The grade and learning area meetings were reportedly where teachers sought, received, and offered guidance to each other on matters relating to the curriculum. It was also where innovations in their specialisation areas were discussed. The principals' interviews had highlighted the value of these meetings in the running of their schools, as the following excerpts indicate:

*We have phase meetings, we have grade meetings where we plan the work together, they even discuss methods of teaching and when they have done it the following week or two weeks there after, they come together and discuss how that worked for them... We alternate grade meetings and house meetings, so we have those fortnightly, phase meetings fortnightly but teachers can meet at half past seven before school starts if they have problems of their own. (Principal, Zungeza)*

*We do have staff development programmes from time to time because there's so much of change happening at the moment. Most of our staff development is motivational things, in other words; how we deal with difficult parents, how to interview parents, discipline policies and all sorts of things...On a weekly basis we have a management meeting, a campus meeting and a grade meeting where we discuss the specific requirements for the specific grade. (Principal, Island View)*

In all the participating schools, these meetings seemed to provide a forum where teachers received support and guidance on instructional and professional matters.

In addition, teachers acknowledged that some of them had more knowledge or skills in certain areas than others did, and indicated that they used each other's expertise for the benefit of the learners. To illustrate, in the focus-group interviews, two of the teachers had the following to say:

*What we usually do is that if we have a problem we discuss it with the deputy and each other... and see if we can find a solution. (Teacher, Island View Focus-group interview)*

*The point while we're still with skills. There are teachers who are very good here in the school. You'd find that you have a problem with a certain child in the class, and then you go to a certain teacher and explain the problem the child has, and then you can maybe make an exchange. And you say please so and so please take this child for me. You find that the child... there is even improvement. (Teacher, Zungeza, Focus-group interview).*

At Zungeza they have established a culture of collaboration and are able to work as a team. This was emphasised by the principal, and was evident in the focus-group interview:

**Teacher 1:** *And another thing that we usually do with our learners, when they are in the next grade, we usually meet with their new teacher, especially those who are slow, they do pass but we know very well that they have got a problem. So you have to make a follow up. So you usually check with their new teacher.*

**Researcher:** *Doesn't the other teacher get offended?*

**Teacher 2:** *No. We are used to each other. Each and every year, when the year start you go to the next grade teacher, you introduce your learners. These you must take care of because they've got this and this problem. So whenever the teacher encounters any problem she knows that she can come back to you if she fails to cope or she fails to cope with her. Then she will say okay, let me go back to my colleague. Then with that kind of arrangement we've helped ourselves. (Focus-group interview, Zungeza)*

Thanks to the supportive environment they work in – albeit within the context of negative labelling and possible self-fulfilling prophecies – the teachers seemed to have been able to address most of the problems they came across concerning learning and teaching. The principal was so confident of her staff's ability to handle challenges, that she was keen to see the implementation of the policy of inclusion as soon as possible:

*In fact, I would like to start tomorrow; I would like to experience new things. I want to see how it (inclusion) is going to take place because we have had such children before who have had problems, who have different needs. Really we have not had a problem because you know we work as a team. The teachers try to take the problem all by themselves then it comes to the HoDs and eventually it comes to me, so, we work as a team even at their meetings they invite me if there is a problem. So far we have been lucky to be able to solve our problems. (Principal, Zungeza)*

While it was encouraging that the school seemed to be embracing the policy and concept of inclusion, it was troubling that their understandings of its nature and principles were limited or distorted, as indicated by findings discussed in the previous sections. This was indicative of the need for more targeted interventions in the system as a whole.

What emerges from the above discussion is the fact that the schools' supportive environments were made possible by the cultures (ways of doing) that prevailed in

them. To illustrate, Darling-Hammond (1990: 235) highlights what she thinks determines the success of innovations. Citing Elmore (1983), she asserts that:

...local leadership and motivations for change are critical to policy success, that local agencies must adapt policies to local circumstances rather than adopt them; and that teachers' and administrators' opportunities for continual learning, experimentation, and decision making during implementation determine whether policies will come alive in schools or fade away when the money or enforcement pressures end.

Following on from this, Sergiovanni (1999) also cites motivation for change as essential for the successful implementation of any innovation.

These discussions and observations led me to two conclusions: one was regarding support from outside, and the other concerning support generated by schools themselves. The first point was two-fold: on one hand, the level of support provided by the Greyville district was reportedly higher than that provided by Shelley Beach and the province. On the other hand, the support from the PGSES and the Greyville district was regarded as inadequate by the teachers and principals in the schools. My second conclusion was that at school level, while efforts and support systems were generally unequally developed and varied, the three schools seemed to have developed some support structures and systems for dealing with the various issues that confront them. By being responsive to the challenges they faced in their task of promoting quality education for all, the schools were already developing an inclusive practice. In the context of implementing EWP6, such structures would be essential, as they render the school environments receptive to innovation. However, unless these efforts are targeted and mobilised expressly for the innovation, they could go to waste because the provincial Department of Education was slow to begin implementation, and to capitalise on the existing structures in schools.

As argued previously in this thesis, implementing change is not a once-off event, but rather a process that takes time. Therefore, more time should be allocated for training than the current two-hour workshops. Early in 2006, I was happy to learn that the district has changed from the cascade model of training to training all teachers in a school. The new method allows more time to be allocated for teachers to learn together within their work contexts, in an attempt to understand the demands and implications of the innovation (inclusive education) from their own perspectives. Together, based on their shared understanding, they can decide on the best way to respond to those changes. In essence, the findings in this study suggest that more effective methods of running staff development and support programmes urgently need to be identified and developed.

#### **6.3.4.3 Changing the school culture: inter- and intra-school collaborations**

This study was also premised on the notion that re-culturing is crucial to ensure sustainable change, because it focuses on deeper issues, such as – changing behaviour; debating issues around the innovation; and creating and committing to shared beliefs about the purpose of schools – instead of focusing on superficial organisational issues (such as which group of learners is taught where, and how). In particular, the thesis posits that effective implementation of EWP6 in schools requires school environments and cultures that reflect the principles and values of inclusion. Obviously, this not only requires the retraining of teachers, as well as providing support for them and their schools (teaching and learning materials and expert monitoring of progress). In particular, it requires the adoption of completely new ways of thinking

about and practising teaching, a process Doyle (2002) and Clarke (2000) have referred to as re-culturing. Re-culturing involves collaboration among teachers and between teachers and others in the system. The study examined the ways in which the three schools, the district, and the province, had undergone such re-culturing. This was examined in terms of their change in behaviour, their commitment to shared beliefs and ways of teaching and – in particular – their levels of collaboration to address issues that affect teaching and learning.

In this study, the findings suggest that within schools such collaboration was varied. It is important to note that at Zungeza Primary – where a culture of collaboration was dominant – the school seemed to be more responsive to the individual needs of learners. Even though there were instances of labelling, the school had created a context that was conducive to developing an inclusive education system. Specifically, at this school, my observations over the period of data collection were that a culture that fostered interdependence and collaboration had been developed, which created a sense of common purpose among staff members. Even new staff members get a quick induction into how things were done at this school. Hargreaves (1994) observes that teamwork and collegiality tend to thrive in schools where the culture is naturally collaborative. In such environments, cooperation occurs voluntarily and without any prompting, as teachers realise the value of sharing expertise.

In addition, Rosenholtz (1991) argues that the willingness of teachers to collaborate is influenced by the social organisation of their school, which can either support or

discourage collaboration. Some of the workplace conditions she cites as supportive of collaboration are the existence of a common vision, teacher involvement in decision-making, and team teaching. During my interactions with staff at Mangelengele Primary, I learned of the existence of a Mission and Vision statement, which was developed in collaboration between the SMTs and the teachers. The fact that it had been collaboratively developed was evident from the teachers' understanding and acceptance of the principles and values it communicated. A teacher commented that inclusive education would succeed in the school as it already had a vision and mission statement that supported those of the department.

At Zungeza Primary, teacher involvement in decision-making and the existence of a common vision was evident. To illustrate, during the course of this study, two teachers became redundant, due to the PPN. Notably, because of their commitment to the vision of the school, they continued teaching on a voluntary basis. This was particularly remarkable within the climate of unemployment and poverty in the province. When asked to comment on this phenomenon, the principal informed me that when these teachers volunteered, the other teachers quickly decided to contribute to their upkeep by donating groceries and money to enable them to come to school.

Another example of this involvement is that, in the focus-group interview at Zungeza, when asked whether they thought their school was ready for inclusive education, one of the teachers responded:

*I think inclusion will work if we as educators talk to the next teacher in the following year...if we do this hand over at the beginning of the year... As a*



*teacher for grade 1 you hand over to grade 2. Like those learners who have difficult problems you'd find they are known in the whole school.*

A second teacher in the group agreed:

*Yes, like if I have Mxolisi. Mxolisi is weak; I've known him from a long time. But now I heard he's troublesome and doesn't want to come to school. Maybe the teacher doesn't know. He was always promoted to the next level and they just overlooked at me (sic). I was never asked. If I am asked then she would know about him...*

At the same school, more sentiments highlighting the school's collaborative culture and use of existing expertise to address problems were expressed:

*...There are teachers who are very good here in the school. You'd find that you have a problem with a certain child in the class, and then you go to a certain teacher and explain the problem the child has, and then you can maybe make an exchange....*

For me, this type of commitment and resourcefulness from all parties is crucial, and indicates what a spirit of community can do for the wellbeing of a school. I contend that it is this kind of commitment and collaboration that renders a school environment conducive to the implementation of innovations such as inclusive education. Without it, teachers would be acting solely on mandates from management, rather than from a belief that the innovation is beneficial to teaching and learning.

This thesis also argues that the failure of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and its subsystems to capitalise on the existence of these school environments means lost opportunities for the effective dissemination of information about EWP6, and the implementation of inclusive education in schools. Rosenholtz (1991) maintains that working together provides opportunities for learning together. She explains that in order

to improve teaching and learning, the whole school needs to be involved, rather than individual teachers. She also emphasises that teachers can only improve their practice through collaboration with others. Hargreaves (1994: 186) concurs and adds that research evidence shows that collaboration and collegiality lead to professional growth and organisational development, and are instrumental in securing effective implementation of innovations. Consequently, schools such as Zungeza and Mangelengele, which have developed a culture of collaboration – albeit to different levels – are better placed to engage with both internal and external forces of change. Therefore, it is critical that such a culture be encouraged and supported to ensure that teachers are learning together and supporting each other in their learning.

There was further evidence of a culture of collaboration in at least one of the two schools that had initiated and supported cooperation with other schools. At the time of the study, Zungeza Primary was collaborating with neighbouring schools on various issues. One example of this was the SMILE project, which was facilitated by learners from a neighbouring high school. In the absence of guidance from the circuit or district on how to develop school policies, this principal had invited other principals to a workshop where they would work together to develop policies for their schools. Although the intention is praiseworthy, it seemed to be a case of the blind leading the blind. The practicality of this exercise is questionable when undertaken by someone with no training in facilitating such a process.

The following incident further exemplified the significance of and need for interschool collaboration in the implementation of inclusive education. At a district meeting held in September 2004, a number of teachers from one of the pilot schools in the district complained that they had admitted more learners on the understanding that they would get more posts, but that these never materialised. As a result, their school was overcrowded. In his response, the District Manager promised to look into the matter urgently, but also emphasised the need to share resources (human and material) with neighbouring schools for the benefit of learners.

This was a very sensible suggestion because, according to Evans et al (1999), collaborating enables schools to meet a wider range of needs. However, this suggestion was problematic in three ways. First, because it came from the top and was not generated within a relevant context and was, therefore, likely to be unpopular among teachers and schools. Second, as sensible as it was, the logistics of sharing resources may prove too time-consuming and require more skills than teachers and schools have. As such, co-ordinating and monitoring such an endeavour would be difficult. Third, sharing and collaborating between schools and with the rest of the education system has not been the norm. Extensive training and support will need to be provided by the provincial department to help teachers unlearn this. At school level, to avoid conflicts, a lot of trust and maturity is required to be able to claim co-ownership of limited resources. As Evans et al (1999: 68) argue,

*Collaboration requires trust because it relies on informal or non-legal agreements to share resources and to open up to the scrutiny of others.*

Two of the frameworks used to underpin this study – the systems theory and the philosophy of inclusion – emphasise the need for interdependence in the various subsystems of education. The findings of this study suggest that this was not evident in the current relationships between the provincial Department of Education and its subsystems. What seems to be emerging quite obviously is the disconnectedness of the various subsystems of the education department. This includes: the fact that within some schools there seemed to be less sharing (of information or expertise) than in others; weak and almost non-existent school to school links; mechanical and non-supportive school to ward, circuit or district links, and even less collaboration between circuits, districts and the provincial level. To illustrate, a vital unit in this system – the PGSES – seemed to be overwhelmed by the quality and quantity of support that different schools required, and there seemed to be no reinforcement coming from other units. This lack of support, in the face of staff shortages, makes one wonder if it will be at all possible to provide relevant support to all the district schools within the new system.

The findings of the pilot study, reported in **Chapter Five**, suggested that PGSES staff were often assigned other duties as and when the provincial office saw fit, which resulted in impromptu changes to their itineraries. Sometimes, these changes took place at the expense of pressing local needs. One of the study's objectives was to identify strategies used to manage the diffusion of this innovation between the various subsystems, particularly between schools and their districts. Since there was no

relationship identified between the sub-systems, can one assume that this is part of the problem that inclusive education is trying to correct?

The fact that the province was targeting internal collaboration in order to develop an inclusive practice was also encouraging. If the provincial CES's plan to rope in all other Directorates into the inclusion programme succeeds, it will help to ensure that everybody understands the national and provincial priorities, and that all the support personnel march to the same beat. What is of most importance, however, is that all sectors of the education system will be working towards the same goal. At a national level, the Deputy Minister of Education has also called for all stakeholders to assist the Department of Education to achieve the goal of developing an all-encompassing society through an inclusive system of education. There is still hope that collaboration will become popular, especially because those in the lead are vocal about it being the only way to achieve the task at hand.

#### **6.4 Summary and conclusions**

First, this study investigated teachers' experiences and understandings of the policy statement. Their experiences were examined and interpreted within the context of the provincial Department of Education's diffusion of EWP6 and inclusive education. To this effect, findings from the three schools suggest that teachers' understandings and experiences of the innovation were poor due to inadequate information dissemination about the new policy. Three years after the release of the policy, teachers and principals in these schools reported receiving very little to no information or training about it.

Consequently, the study asserts that the diffusion of inclusive education as an innovation in schools and the system as a whole has so far been poorly managed. As a result, teachers – the most important instruments of its delivery – know very little about it, or a distorted understanding of it.

Second, linked to the abovementioned question, the study also examined the strategies used to facilitate the diffusion of this innovation at school level. To this effect, and possibly due to the limited information and training teachers had received at the time of the study, they had inadequate, varied, and often distorted understandings of the innovation. Their understandings suggested that instead of the paradigm shift hoped for by the new policy, most of them still relied heavily on the old deficit, medical model of educating learners with special educational needs. The use of ineffective diffusion strategies had failed to create a baseline understanding of the innovation, and the limited training they had received did not give them the skills to address diversity.

Third, the study investigated the degree to which the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, the Greyville district, and the schools, mobilised support to prepare for the implementation of inclusive education. The findings suggest that the teachers and other stakeholders in the schools regarded the support they got from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education as inadequate and often inappropriate. For example, very few of the teachers had attended any training workshops or meetings related to EWP6 and inclusive education, three years after its adoption. This was cause for concern. Even more disturbing was the fact that those who had attended had often been exposed to a

brief, once-off workshop, from which they were expected to 'cascade' their knowledge down to their own schools. In addition, no follow-up support in the form of monitoring and evaluation, and resources seemed to be available to schools and teachers, and this was obviously impacting negatively on the future prospects of the new policy.

Therefore, this thesis argues that unless there is a genuine and targeted effort made by the provincial Department of Education to train and support personnel in relation to this policy – there is little chance that it will be effectively implemented. This is with particular reference to the context within which the policy will be implemented, which is characterised by multiple policy reforms, a lack of teaching and learning resources, community poverty, and HIV/AIDS – among other factors – not to mention the multiple demands these made on teachers and schools. As a result, many learners who are experiencing barriers to learning will remain marginalised and excluded from learning.

The next chapter discusses these findings and identifies their implications for policy and practice, as well as for further research.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ***Explaining the limited understanding of EWP6 among teachers in selected KwaZulu-Natal schools***

*Problems of implementation are usually more serious when the adopter is an organization rather than an individual. In an organizational setting, a number of individuals are usually involved in the innovation-decision process, and the implementers are often a different set of people from the decision makers (Rogers, 2003:179).*

#### **7.1 Introduction**

As argued previously in this thesis, there are many children who do not derive maximum benefit from the school system due to numerous barriers to their learning and development. Some of the barriers are permanent, while others are transient, and some are located within learners, while others are situated in the learning context (school) (Department of Education, 1997; 2002). In South Africa, educational provision has historically been organised according to learners' characteristics. Those learners who were seen to have 'special educational needs' were viewed as a group that did not belong in regular schools, and should be sent to separate special schools where specialists taught them. In contrast, research has shown that this separation does not produce the best results (Ntombela, 1998), and those who have been marginalised by this system are calling for an end to this stigmatising separation. The challenge then has been to create a system of education that will ensure that all children benefit from



our educational provision; otherwise we run the risk of perpetuating inequalities and entrenching discriminatory social conditions (UNESCO, 1998).

Within the context of educational restructuring in the post-apartheid era, an inclusive education and training system as presented in *Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education - Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (Department of Education, 2001), was adopted. The introduction of this policy hopes to address numerous inequities that plague our society, and to create a caring and just society (ibid). The research study reported here documents how the process of developing such a system is unfolding in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. In particular, it examines the procedure adopted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to disseminate the policy and prepare schools (mostly teachers and other stakeholders) for its implementation. Thus, the main focus of this study was threefold.

First, the study aimed to investigate teachers' understandings and experiences of EWP6 and inclusive education in three primary schools in two districts of KwaZulu-Natal. Second, in order to understand the factors that impact on the teachers' understandings of the innovation, the study examined the strategies used by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for the diffusion of EWP6 and inclusive education in schools. Third, the study investigated the teachers' views regarding the extent to which the provincial Department of Education and its subsystems (the Greyville and Shelley Beach districts and the schools themselves) mobilised support,

and the ways in which this support was used to prepare and support teachers in their efforts towards implementing inclusive education.

## **7.2 Teachers' understandings of inclusive education**

A pivotal question to ask is how we can explain teachers' poor understandings of EWP6 and inclusive education in the three schools? The whole study was underpinned by the social constructivist theory, which emphasises the social engagement of the learner in making meaning (Crotty, 1998; Donald et al, 1997; 2002). Within this framework, the study was based on the notion that teachers – as the key initiators of implementation of this policy – would have to actively participate in learning the values and principles that inform an inclusive education system. This would enable them to understand, accept, and ultimately implement it in their own classrooms. In addition, data collection and analysis was informed by two conceptual frameworks – namely inclusion and re-culturing – as well as two theoretical frameworks, the systems theory and the theory of innovation diffusion.

It was from these frameworks that three key propositions (Bassey, 1999) about the experiences and responses of teachers to the diffusion of EWP6 and inclusive education – in the selected schools – emerged. These propositions were tentative and were to be corroborated by the evidence obtained from the study, as well as by further evidence, which lay beyond the scope of the present investigation. The propositions were linked to the research questions that informed data collection and analysis during

the study, and were used to explain the lack of, or poor understanding, among teachers with regard to EWP6 and inclusive education.

The next section discusses these propositions in relation to data analysis and findings from the study.

### **7.2.1 Inefficient and ineffective diffusion of the innovation**

In relation to the question of how teachers understand, experience, and respond to the new policy of inclusion, **Chapter Four** proposed that teachers in the selected schools have a limited understanding of EWP6 and inclusive education, and tend to respond negatively to it. As a result, they either don't implement it at all, or – if they do – it is implemented poorly. This assertion was based on the notion that teachers' knowledge and acceptance of the policy, as well as their implementation of it, are likely to be influenced by how well they (and other stakeholders at the different levels of the education system) are informed about it. In addition, their experience would be determined by the kinds of training they receive.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers in the three schools had limited and varied understandings of EWP6 and inclusive education. In particular, their thinking still exhibited the philosophies of the medical discourse (discussed in **Chapter Two**) in which they were trained, which views the individual learner as deficient. The findings also suggest that the teachers' acceptance of the innovation was varied. Their conceptualisations of the strategies and resources required for the implementation

process were also inadequate because of their poor and mixed understandings. Several factors could explain this. The first proposition which emerged from **Chapter Four**, and was informed by social constructivism, was that for any policy – and particularly EWP6 and inclusive education – to be understood, accepted, and ultimately implemented effectively at school level, efficient diffusion of the innovation needs to occur. This includes giving teachers, as well as learners, opportunities to construct meaning and arrive at a common understanding of the innovation. Evans et al (1999:65) attest to this, stating that it is important for any professional development training to be continuous and to provide opportunities

..for teachers to consider, discuss, argue about, and work through the changes in their assumptions. Without this, the technical changes that they are exposed to during training are unlikely to make a deep lasting impact on their practice.

Essentially, this means that adequate and accurate information needs to be effectively disseminated to all stakeholders. It is crucial that teachers be involved in the process of developing innovations, and not just informed about them (Kruss, 1998). It is also imperative that teachers have a sound understanding of the innovation's concept, rationale, nature, and appropriate strategies for translating it into practice. However, as outlined in **Chapter Six**, findings from this study suggest that teachers in the three schools in this study had a limited understanding of EWP6 and inclusive education in general. Furthermore, the ways in which information about EWP6 and inclusive education has been disseminated to schools, and particularly to teachers, has been highly problematic, which possibly explains their poor understandings of the innovation.

To illustrate, as discussed in previous chapters, policy generation in South Africa occurs at a national level, and provinces have to facilitate and monitor the implementation process (Kruss, 1998; de Clercq, 2001). Naturally, the expectation is that the initiator of policies would, at the time of adoption, also provide information on the nature of the new policy, its values and principles, as well as how it ought to be implemented. In reality, experience and emerging research findings since 1994 suggest that this is not always the case. The dissemination of EWP6 seems to have been no exception. First, while the policy was developed and released in July 2001, it was only a year later in 2002 that the Directorate of Inclusive Education published the *Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education* (Department of Education, 2002). Second, for unknown reasons, the document was only circulated in 2004 – three years later – and only a few of the respondents in this study had seen or heard of it at the time of data collection. This means that not only do teachers lack an adequate understanding of the innovation and its values and principles, they have also not been informed about, nor trained in the appropriate strategies needed for its effective implementation. It is this absence of implementation strategies at the level of adoption, which has led Jansen to conclude that – for obvious reasons (such as redress and transformation) – in the post-apartheid South African education context, adopting policies represents mere political symbolism (2001). The obvious fact that teachers within this study have misunderstood inclusive education confirms that information on the policy was not being disseminated with the accuracy and urgency it demanded. Furthermore, the fact that not much seems to have been done towards diffusion of the innovation and the ultimate implementation of EWP6 – five years after

adoption – threatens the set goal of full implementation in 20 years time, and seems to confirm the symbolism claim.

Third, the need for a superior dissemination process, particularly as it relates to informing and preparing teachers for the implementation of EWP6, is urgent because, as indicated in **Chapter Two**, the South African conceptualisation of inclusive education system differs from that of other contexts (mainly the Northern hemisphere) where emphasis has tended to be only on learners with disabilities. In our context, learners with disabilities are just one of many groups that have been marginalised by the system, and have – as a result – been experiencing barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 1997). Other groups that are marginalised by the current system include street children, working children, teenage parents, children from indigent families, children whose first language is not the LoLT, as well as children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. However due to the paucity of information about this new system of education, in order to understand and make sense of it, teachers have been left with no choice but to use what they have heard from other contexts, and to rely on their own training during the apartheid education system. To illustrate, in the case of briefing workshops where the focus should have been on helping teachers to learn “new ways of thinking, seeing, living and working in our schools” (Clarke, 2000: 11), the provincial Department of Education seems to have failed to raise awareness of the numerous sources of exclusion in our system. They have also failed to challenge teachers’ established “patterns of working and long-established beliefs and values which underpin both personal and organizational life.”

(Clarke, 2000: 10). In essence, the provincial Department of Education failed to convey the essence of inclusive education.

### **7.2.2 Inappropriate dissemination strategies**

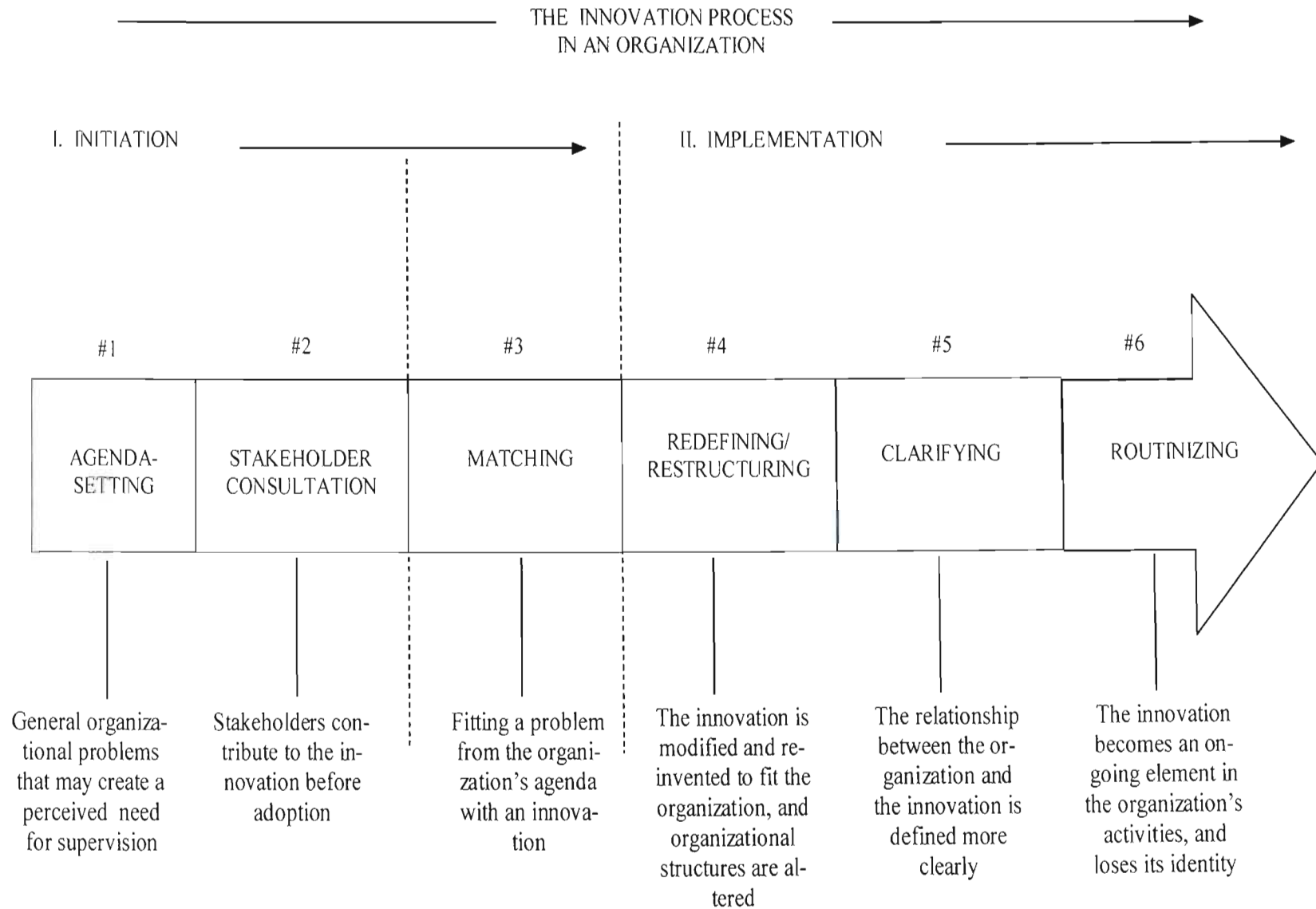
The second research question in this study was two-fold: first, what strategies are used to manage the diffusion of this innovation at district and school levels, and, second, how do these strategies impact on the stakeholders' understandings, experiences and response to the innovation? By using the systems theory (Donald et al, 1997; 2002) and Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovation theory as theoretical lenses for analysis, this thesis is premised on the notion that, first – like other education systems – the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has different subsystems (e.g. curriculum, examinations, governance) or levels (e.g. provincial, regional, and district officials, school management, teachers, and parents), all equally contributing to the effective and efficient provision of education in the province. Second, the success of inclusive education and its implementation depends on whether, in preparing the system for the implementation of the policy, these stakeholders and sectors participate equally at *all* stages of the diffusion of the innovation (Rogers, 2003) – from information dissemination, to training, right through to implementation.

As such, the implementation of inclusive education needs to integrate the different subsystems or sectors of the education system, and view them as pieces of the same puzzle for realising the goals of the innovation. For example, for the implementation of EWP6, the different directorates of the provincial Department of Education should have

been involved from the initial stages of conceptualisation, through to piloting, dissemination, and implementation. The diagram below, adapted from Rogers (2003), suggests an alternative to how all stakeholders can be represented throughout the process of reform initiation.



Table 5: Suggested innovation process, adapted from Rogers (2003:421)



According to Rogers (2003: 421), the innovation process in an organisation comprises two main phases, namely: *initiation* and *implementation*. The *initiation* phase is further divided into two. First, agenda setting, in which a system-wide problem that needs to be dealt with is identified, and – second – matching, in which an innovation is developed in response to the identified problem. The second phase, implementation, is further divided into three stages. The first stage involves redefinition/restructuring, in which the innovation is reconfigured to suit the organisation, and structures are changed in accordance with the innovation. The second involves clarifying, in which the fit between the innovation and the organisation becomes clearer, and the third entails routinising, in which the innovation is routinised as it is institutionalised within the organisation.

Findings from this thesis suggest that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has followed a similar trajectory, particularly in relation to the initiation phase, hence the inadequacy and unsuitability of the diffusion process. At the provincial level, only one directorate, the Directorate of Inclusive Education, identified the problem and set the agenda for addressing it, which was adopting and implementing an inclusive education system. In addition, they alone, developed an innovation in response to the identified problem. This emerged in an interview with the provincial CES of Special Education, who stated that the Directorate of Inclusive Education was only planning to “brief” and “bring on board” other directorates in the provincial Department of Education during the last quarter of 2004, three years after the adoption of the policy. Effectively, this meant that the various directorates were not involved, nor did they contribute to the pilot

programme implemented in selected schools as a 'test' to see what would work and why, and more importantly, what resources (human and material) were needed for the effective implementation of inclusive education in the system as a whole. This late invitation of other directorates highlights the ineffectiveness of changing structures, for example – the establishment of an Inclusive Education Directorate – before the culture of working inclusively sets in. This is exactly what Doyle (2002) cautions against when he argues that a change of structures does not necessarily lead to a changed culture. To address this, he suggests that focus should be on changing the organisations' culture (beliefs and values among others) as this brings about lasting change.

It is possible that the identified lack of an integrated strategy involving the various directorates contributed to the inadequate/inappropriate information dissemination to the school level. In the Greyville district in which the study was conducted, it was only the PGSES unit that seemed to view this policy as a priority. This unit planned and facilitated meetings and workshops, while the other directorates concentrated on and pursued other agendas. The fact that other directorates were not involved in this process might suggest that there were contradictions in the policies and actual practices of the provincial Department of Education. Not only was the non-participation of other directorates during the early stages of this policy exclusionary, it was also contradictory to the principles of inclusive education. On one hand, the government is planning to create and promote a single, integrated system that includes all. On the other hand, its own practices and processes promote an exclusionary climate for policy development. Furthermore, if the assumption was made that other subsystems in the

provincial Department of Education would be involved in the process at some point in the future – as the provincial CES suggested – it was not immediately clear what mechanisms would be in place in case there was reluctance and lack of or poor 'buy in' on the part of the other directorates. It was also not clear what strategies or programmes would be implemented for the organisational and professional development necessary to understand and implement the innovation within their constituencies and areas of responsibility.

An integrated system presumes that if the other directorates lag behind in their understanding of inclusion and its philosophy, their ability or willingness to support teachers is in question. Furthermore, it presumes that the pooling of personal and organisational learning as resources (physical, human, skills, and knowledge) for a common purpose is necessary for success. This knowledge and commitment is critical – particularly at senior level – so that those who implement the policy at school level (teachers) can get the support they need (including professional development, resource allocation and training in their use, and curriculum training, among several others). This is based on the notion that the success of an innovation is enhanced when all stakeholders, particularly those in leadership, shift their focus from individual's learning to the social context of learning (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999). When this does not happen, an incoherent scenario of different agendas and priorities develops, which further sends conflicting messages and creates confusion among the lower ranks of the system.

Data analysis from the study indicates that inappropriate strategies were being used to disseminate information about this policy. First, at the school level, teachers were not included at the initiation phase of the innovation. Second, the continued use of the cascade model to train teachers was not effective, but it seemed to be the only method at the district's disposal.

Second, the time allotted to the professional development workshops (two hours) was completely inadequate. It is simply not possible to introduce people to a new philosophy in two hours. Even teachers need the opportunity to construct their own meaning and understanding. In addition, due to historical factors, school contexts differ greatly within districts, and unless those responsible for the professional development of teachers take that into consideration, they are likely to fall short of the mark. Effectively, this means that generic courses are not sufficient to equip teachers to deal with diverse issues that confront them in their work contexts. Instead, there is a need to supplement generic skills with specific knowledge and skills to help them tackle context-specific issues. This could not be achieved in the type of workshops mentioned earlier. In the spirit of inclusion, conducting a needs analysis would have been more appropriate before training started, to ensure that what teachers themselves identify as 'must have' knowledge and skills are covered in training sessions.

These inappropriate strategies cited above suggest that there is a need to further expand the initiation phase to include the following three stages, namely: agenda setting, agenda re-setting or stakeholder consultation, and matching. Agenda re-

setting or stakeholder consultation would involve consultations with the various stakeholders at the different levels of the education system, from the provincial level through to the district and school levels. During this stage, stakeholders would be widely consulted and their views sought to influence the innovation even *before* it is adopted as policy. In addition, Teacher Union members, district representatives, and different teacher forums or groups would influence the thinking about the perceived problem/s in the school system and assist in identifying possible solutions. Although teacher unions are legally recognised as representing teachers' interests, they are not familiar with the daily challenges facing schools and teachers.

As such, this thesis suggests that district teachers themselves (e.g. forums and clusters) must be consulted, as they are best able to understand the complexities of their own situations. This is necessary as these stakeholders need to understand what the new system entails, why it is being introduced, and how it can – and should – work. This will help to secure their cooperation and commitment to the innovation; ensure their participation in decision making about the role they will play; how they will fit in within the overall activities of the provincial Department of Education; as well as what training and resources they need for this to happen. Furthermore, such integration would ensure unity within the Department of Education's various priorities and goals.

Like Rogers (2003), I realise that as we increase the number of people involved in making the decision about an innovation, it slows down the rate of adoption. However, I am convinced that it is better to have a slower adoption process than to have a poor

implementation due to inadequate understanding of the innovation. For me, it is better to delay adoption so that as many stakeholders as possible understand and accept the innovation. In this way, the progression from 'matching' to the 'redefining' stage will enjoy wider support, which is likely to increase the chances of successful implementation.

### **7.2.3 Inadequate support**

The third research question in the study investigated what support is available to teachers (and schools) to enable them to embrace the principles enshrined in the new system of inclusive education and to implement EWP6? **Chapter Four** posited that the nature and quality of the teachers' and other stakeholders' experiences would be greatly influenced by both the quantity and quality of support available to them within schools and within districts. This means that if teachers have adequate opportunities to debate and discuss what inclusion is and why it is necessary, it is more likely that they will develop a common understanding of its principles. It is then possible that they will accept the policy and what it represents, and their implementation efforts and strategies will be focused on a common goal. As discussed above, by adapting Rogers' (2003) model of diffusion of innovation, this thesis suggests a third, inclusive stage during the initiation phase of the diffusion process, namely agenda re-setting or stakeholder consultation. This would provide opportunities for debate, questioning, and clarifying to occur at a grass-roots level early on during the process.

In addition, the success of the policy in schools depends on the quality and kinds of training and support teachers receive. Data analysis in relation to this question employed Doyle's (2002) concept of re-culturing. This analysis was also based on the notion that inclusion not only involves a complex paradigm shift, but also requires a sophisticated understanding, sound skills, and a well-defined set of values for its effective implementation on the part of stakeholders, particularly teachers. Obviously, for these skills to develop, a lot of "new learning and unlearning" (Clarke, 2000) in the form of training and retraining is necessary at individual, school, and district levels. In addition, a great measure of encouragement and support is critical, as people will be entering new territory. Thus, in-service training and professional development of all stakeholders is crucial, and cannot be superficial or brief: as UNESCO (1993) clearly states, learning is a process, it takes time. For this reason, these programmes will need to be extensive and continuous in their design and implementation.

Of particular concern in this study was the fact that teachers' responses to the questionnaire revealed severe misconceptions about this system of education. These misunderstandings were not surprising at all as the content, scope and duration of the workshops I had observed during this inquiry were too brief to bring about in-depth understandings of this innovation. In addition, as emphasised earlier, the district relied on the use of the cascade model to disseminate information about inclusive education. A few teachers from each school (usually one) were trained, and the expectation was that they would return to their schools and provide training for the rest of the school. Obviously, as data from the study suggests, this either led to misconceptions, or failed



to promote a sound understanding of the innovation among the various stakeholders, particularly the teachers in the three schools. On one hand, it is possible that the misconceptions among teachers developed as a result of the inadequacy of the available training. The fact that the training sessions were scarce and too brief, and that the cascade model of training was used, could have resulted in poor understandings of the innovation and its principles. As indicated in **Chapter Six**, most of the teachers tended to have similar (mis)understandings of inclusive education, which suggested that they may have been told the same thing by the facilitators. This misunderstanding might be exacerbated by the fact that no clear and unified definition or understanding of inclusive education exists internationally as the concept and system of inclusive education is defined differently according to different countries and contexts.

Even though all stakeholders and sectors within the education system need to have a thorough understanding of inclusive education, their practices and philosophies also need to converge in ways that facilitate, foster, and support such integration and collaboration. This requires high levels of effective interaction between the national system and its subsystems at the provincial and district levels, which unfortunately do not seem to be in place yet. In such a context, open and effective communication is essential, but in this inquiry the absence of clear communication lines was painfully visible. One striking example of this was the lack of response to the repeated reports that the cascade model is not working.

The document analysis in this study further confirmed the absence of information sharing within the provincial system. Other than EWP6 (which was not available in two of the schools involved in this study), the only reference to inclusive education was a circular inviting one or two representatives to an introductory workshop. The fact that between July 2001 and July 2004 there was such a dearth of information about inclusive education at a school level is puzzling. The national Department of Education had given itself a 20-year time frame in which to fully execute this policy, and yet three years down the line there were no signs to indicate the legitimacy of this intention. In accordance with the systems perspective, such paucity of information threatens the sustainability of any system which could suggest that the success of an innovation, introduced in a system that does not have an effective and meaningful interaction among its various subsystems, is threatened.

### **7.3 Discussion**

This study investigated the ways in which teachers in three schools in the Greyville district of KwaZulu-Natal understood and experienced the newly adopted policy of inclusion in schools, namely EWP6. The study examined the factors that impact on their understandings and experiences, and established that – based on the teachers' views as well as conversations with selected officials from the provincial and district PGSES – the diffusion/dissemination strategy used to inform and prepare teachers and schools for the implementation of inclusive education has been inadequate.

This study suggests several explanations for the poor understanding and lack of acceptance of the innovation in the three participating schools. One of them uses Rogers' (2003) theory of innovation diffusion, which concerns itself with how a new idea is communicated to members of the system using set channels over a period of time and ensuring that information is shared until members reach a common understanding of the innovation. Rogers explains how an innovation progresses through two stages, from initiation (involving agenda setting and matching) to implementation (involving redefinition, clarification, and routinising). Findings from this study seem to suggest that the national Department of Education attempted to follow a similar process when introducing reforms. Although it is structurally possible for the department to monitor this process adequately, findings from this study suggest that an unquestioned culture of one-way communication from the top (national and provincial level) to the bottom (the school level) prevails, making it very difficult to engage in meaningful discussions with the teachers.

Obviously, communication within such a culture is inadequate and there are likely to be 'gaps' in the diffusion of any messages. One example of this is that there are no open forums for debate for those in the lower ranks of the system, where they can question decisions made at the top, or suggest alternative strategies that would suit their particular school and community contexts. To address this 'gap' this thesis argues that after what Rogers (2003) refers to as agenda setting, an additional agenda re-setting stage or stakeholder consultation (stage two) needs to occur before the matching stage. Adding this stage will assist in fostering a new culture of collaboration and

dialogue in the system, or what Doyle (2002) calls re-culturing, by developing “schools as learning organisations that facilitate learning at personal and organisational levels” (Clarke, 2000:20).

As a result of the problematic culture of communication between the different subsystems of the provincial system of education, this study identified serious gaps in teachers’ understandings of EWP6, and inclusive education in particular. Because the main change agents (teachers) have not yet received adequate information to enable them to understand the innovation, misconceptions about inclusive education have arisen. In this regard, the teachers in the three schools voiced the following issues, namely: their limited understandings of the innovation; their feelings of exclusion from the decision-making process; their expectations that they would simply implement the policy; misgivings about the policy and its worth. With reference to such misgivings and their causes, Hopkins et al, (1994) are concerned that the reliance on the traditional ‘top-down’ approach to transform schools does not produce the best results. Such an approach, argues Fullan (2000), pushes schools to adopt reforms that they have no capacity to implement. This, he adds, results in changed language and structures (probably to satisfy district officials), while the actual practice of teaching remains the same. Thus, unless drastic steps are taken by the provincial Department of Education and its subsystems to address the inadequacy of the dissemination process that prevailed during data collection for this study, an unchanged culture of teaching and learning practices in classrooms across the province will persist long after the supposed implementation of EWP6.

Instead, research has shown that what is needed is a combination of centralised and decentralised reforms where schools, whether they do or do not use centralised reforms, attempt to develop their practice in the interest of learners (Hopkins et al, 1994; Fleisch, 2002). In the South African context, this could be achieved by the provincial Department of Education raising concerns about the number of learners that are excluded or marginalised by the system of education. By working collaboratively with schools or selected representatives, the provincial department could then explore possible ways to address or reduce this exclusion. Taking this route would provide two desirable end results: first, the same inclusive education agenda would be set, this time involving all the stakeholders key to its effective implementation. Second, and most importantly, a sense of ownership of the innovation would develop among all the stakeholders, particularly teachers, who are the key to policy implementation in schools.

According to Rogers' theory of innovation, agenda setting and matching make up the initiation stage, dominated by policy makers (the most powerful within an organisation) and a few Union representatives, while redefinition, clarification and routinisation are phases of implementation (2003: 421). Since data analysis in this study suggests that the provincial Department of Education, and the South African Ministry of Education generally seem to follow Rogers' phases of innovation diffusion, this thesis concludes that the first two phases – agenda-setting and matching are inadequate, and that the latter three – redefinition, clarification, and routinisation – seem to be neglected.

This is evidenced by the fact that other innovations such as C2005 and OBE were also not very successful. The problem lies not so much with the innovations themselves, but with the ways in which they were adopted, disseminated, and diffused within the various sub-systems of the education system. First, these innovations were initiated and adopted without teachers themselves taking part in the preliminary debates and decision-making, what I have referred to as agenda re-setting or stakeholder consultations in this thesis. Second, inadequate and inappropriate in-service training and professional development of teachers and support staff took place, because the system relied on the cascade model of teacher training. As a result, teachers may in certain instances blindly put into practice what they did not understand or – in most cases – what they did not support. This, in conjunction with the limited support (training, monitoring, and resources) they have been provided, has led critics to conclude that, with few exceptions, the implementation of OBE in most schools has been a failure.

Unfortunately, unless one understands what one is doing and why, there are no chances of the innovation impacting on actual practice. When this happens, as Fullan observed (2000), only surface things change while the core business remains the same. Third, even if the innovation does bring about new practice, it cannot be sustained. Therefore, this thesis suggests that in addition to the five phases suggested by Rogers (2003) for the diffusion of an innovation, an additional sixth phase is necessary in the diffusion of inclusive educational innovations (see **Table 5** on page 271) in South African schools. During the initiation phase of innovation diffusion, stage

two (stakeholders' consultation or agenda re-setting) would ensure that those expected to implement EWP6 will get opportunities to question and debate the innovation until they understand and accept the principles behind it, in order to move onto informed implementation.

To illustrate, findings from this study suggest that in the case of inclusive education, Rogers' (2003) redefinition phase, which follows adoption, seems to have either been rushed or totally omitted, hence the various misconceptions about EWP6 and inclusive education among the respondent teachers. Thus, before redefinition occurs, there seems to be a need to reset the agenda to enable what Weatherley (1979:5) referred to as the "street level bureaucrats". These are the people who will be tasked with putting the innovation into practice (the teachers) and who will get on board at their own level and on terms that they understand and accept. The RNCS looks at learners as constructors of their own knowledge. Teachers are also conceptualised as life-long learners and, therefore, the same principles need to be applied to their learning, and opportunities need to be provided where they are able to engage with the innovation to arrive at their own understandings. Once that has been dealt with, the process can progress to the redefinition phase, where the innovation and its implications can be further unpacked and contextualised.

Thus, this thesis argues for two agenda-setting phases. The first phase may include policy makers at the top echelons of the education system who identify the problems with the existing system as well as possible alternatives to it. The second is the

agenda re-setting phase, which includes the various subsystems of the education system, including teacher representatives from different forums, as well as district and Teacher Union representatives. The suggested agenda re-setting is meant to provide opportunities for the agenda initiated by senior managers to be debated and redefined at a more representative forum, before the innovation is adopted and the implementation agenda is set. This way, all stakeholders will proceed with the same understanding of the innovation, the rationale behind it, and the appropriate strategies needed for its implementation. Unfortunately, one negative consequence of this process of reconciling the agenda is that it would lengthen the period from initiation to implementation. But – in the long run – it would pay dividends through improved implementation, as it would allow teachers to fully understand and accept what they are supposed to be doing. In contrast, a top-down approach to transformation makes teachers feel that their voices are silenced, and might lead to resistance or half-hearted implementation.

Doyle (2002) and Burstein et al (2004) support this notion by suggesting that in our attempts to reform organisations, we should focus on re-culturing so as to ensure lasting change. These authors argue that it is only through re-culturing that stakeholders are forced to reflect on and question their practice. In the same vein, Rizvi and Lingard (1996) caution that increased access and equity will not benefit the marginalised, if institutions remain unchanged. What is needed, they add, is that different levels of the systems should commit to social justice, and provide support for schools and teachers to implement equity policies and promote equitable practices. It



is for this reason that the process of questioning practice, as suggested by Clarke (2000), is intended to force all participants to make common decisions on what needs to be unlearned from past practices, as well as what needs to be learned for future success. The suggested inclusive, system-wide agenda re-setting phase might address this need. In addition, the Ministry of Education, in general, and the provincial Department of Education, in particular, need to seriously evaluate the culture of communication within its subsystems. If they do not, different levels will continue to work at cross purposes, and the various innovations, no matter how valuable and well-intentioned they are, will continue to be misunderstood, resisted, and ultimately poorly implemented.

The findings from this study suggest that the innovation has not yet been widely disseminated, which explains why teachers have not yet changed their understanding of learners, teaching, and learning. This is understandable when one considers that the adoption of inclusive education was an authority innovation-decision (Rogers, 2003), in which the decision was made by a few powerful individuals within a system, while the employees (teachers) were expected to comply. The thesis argues that this lack of shift might have been avoided if the innovation (inclusion) had been properly disseminated. According to the theory of innovation diffusion, communication is a vehicle through which information is created and shared with the constituencies, to enable them to reach a common understanding of the new idea (Clarke, 2000). In the case of EWP6 and inclusive education, communication is lacking both in the initiation and implementation phases. It is not difficult to speculate what happens in cases

where an innovation is not communicated adequately to those (teachers) who are expected to implement and understand it.

The second explanation for the limited understanding of inclusive education uses the systems theory as a framework for analysis. This system facilitates an examination of schools from two perspectives: as complete systems with own contexts, and as subsystems within a wider context (Donald et al, 2002) of districts, provincial and even national systems. It was these contexts that framed my interpretation of teachers' experiences of the policy of inclusion. School systems are linked to circuit, district, provincial, and national offices by policies that regulate the practice of education. Logically, one expects that they are provided with support within these levels. For such support to be provided in a coherent and integrated manner, personnel from the various subsystems (directorates) of the education system need to be involved in all the phases of the diffusion process. On the contrary, the findings from the study suggest that this did not happen. Instead, the PGSES was solely responsible for the process, and four years after its adoption, was only "inviting" the other subsystems to the process. Without an integrated and coherent effort from all sectors that support teachers and schools in their teaching efforts, the effective implementation and sustenance of an inclusive education system in schools will be impossible.

## **7.4 What can we learn about effective education policy dissemination from this study?**

The findings of this study suggest that the two districts' efforts to disseminate EWP6 have not yet succeeded. In particular, as exemplified by the participating teachers' experiences of the dissemination (or non-dissemination) of EWP6, and the resultant discourses of inclusive education among them, efforts to disseminate the new policy have been problematic. Reasons for this include the particular contexts in which the teachers are working and, linked to these, their past educational experiences (as both learners themselves and as teachers), which were characterised and informed by the deficit, medical model. These experiences and views have been further entrenched by the current ineffective professional development and support strategies used to assist teachers and others in the education system to unlearn past experiences and to learn new ways of thinking and doing. In addition, the policy development and dissemination efforts that exclude essential components of the education system have meant that, at best, piecemeal planning and programming is possible.

The findings of this study suggest that for effective policy dissemination, and ultimately successful implementation to occur, new ways of thinking about and practising education need to emerge. Teachers (and other stakeholders in education) need to unlearn previously taught/held beliefs and practices in relation to teaching, learning, learners and the curriculum. In essence, a process of re-culturing needs to be implemented. For this process of unlearning the old (of old beliefs and practices) and learning the new to occur, effective dissemination strategies are needed. These

include professional development and support strategies, which must be: continuous and developed over the long term; contextualised and school based; and must involve the various levels and sectors of the school and the education system (Guskey, 2000).

So, what would such a strategy involve? What role would the various stakeholders have to play to ensure its success? The next section addresses these questions.

## **7.5 Implications**

The findings of the study reported in this thesis have several implications for the Ministry of Education and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, as well as for schools and teachers. In addition, because of the limitations of the research design, and the small sample of schools used in this study, the findings have implications for further research, which should examine not only the diffusion of EWP6, but also its implementation in the education system and in schools. These are discussed in the next section.

### **7.5.1 Policy development and diffusion**

This thesis is based on the notion that policies are mere proclamations that seek to bring about change, but do not actually make practitioners change. The preceding sections have indicated that within the context of EWP6, teachers are viewed as agents of change and as key role players in the implementation of educational reforms. Effectively this means that they should be influencing policy reforms throughout the system of education. As such, they should be involved throughout the various phases

of the diffusion of the innovation, from initiation to adoption levels, through to implementation. From this perspective, they will not simply be victims of reforms initiated by others (Pather, 2003:15), or feel that the inclusive education system has been imposed on them (Engelbrecht et al, 2002). Instead, the processes of policy-making will be open and transparent and will encourage their participation as stakeholders in the schooling system (Kruss, 1998).

In addition, like teachers, the various sectors (directorates) of the education system (e.g. curriculum, teacher development, resource planning, among others) need to participate actively throughout the process too. As stated earlier, this is to ensure that the introduction and implementation of inclusion is done within a coherent and integrated system, where all sectors have a common understanding of the innovation and their roles in its implementation. In this way, their agendas and priorities will not be in direct conflict with the principles and values of inclusive education. Armed with a good understanding of the innovation and the resources and support it requires, they will be in a better position to support teachers in their implementation efforts at school level. At the moment, as the study findings revealed, there is a compartmentalisation mentality that needs to be eradicated at the higher levels of the provincial Department of Education, to ensure that all stakeholders participate actively in all aspects of education. In addition, the imaginary boundaries between the different levels of the system (between schools and circuits, districts and province) need to be made permeable in order to facilitate communication across divisions and between levels.

### **7.5.2 Professional development of teachers**

In keeping with the lessons we have learned from other innovations in the country (e.g. C2005 and OBE), the continued use of the cascade model in the training of teachers for inclusive education is not going to yield the desired results. Instead, an alternative is urgently required to make this process of developing teachers effective and meaningful. For example, one of the issues the study highlighted was the impact of contextual factors on a school's ability to respond to inclusive education. Therefore, a logical solution is to link teachers' professional development to their work contexts. If the programmes are school-based, they are in a better position to acknowledge and address school-specific issues. For example, some schools are dysfunctional (poor culture of learning and teaching, the safety of learners and teachers is questionable, drug abuse is rife, and more) and need to be made functional before inclusive education or any other innovation can be placed on the agenda. A context-blind strategy such as the cascade model is not capable of addressing such issues; instead, it assumes that the playing field is level.

Since there might not be enough staff and resources to implement this model, (since only those officials attached to PGSES units are doing the training) clustering neighbouring schools could go a long way to addressing the problem, as, more often than not, schools serving the same community tend to experience similar problems. The biggest advantage of clustering schools is the support that they give each other, especially in rural areas where some of the staff may be under-qualified or unqualified, and a special school resource centre or the district-based support team may be many

kilometres away. Clustering schools could also benefit learners who experience barriers to learning in that, when they transfer from a local primary school to a local secondary school, they will find teachers who share the same knowledge and, hopefully, skills and passion about creating welcoming classroom environments.

Obviously, this system would be more time-consuming and expensive. However, it is a fact that training and developing staff to implement an innovation cannot be completed in two hours. To unlearn all the teachings of the deficit paradigm will take years of training, practice and information sharing. As a result, teachers will need ample opportunities to read and learn about, discuss and test new strategies of identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development. In addition, teachers and schools need to be supported as they learn different ways of teaching. Changing the existing culture of marginalisation and exclusion in schools to an inclusive culture, or what Doyle (2002) refers to as re-culturing, will take substantial time and support to achieve.

### **7.5.3 School-based policies and practice**

Unless schools and teachers understand the purpose of system and school-generated policies, they will continue to create (or copy) policy documents that collect dust in their cupboards – documents that do not affect practice at all. In a way, this is linked to the professional development of teachers. Thus, the policy process at school level needs to follow the same process as that suggested for the provincial (and national) level, in which teachers, as well as the other stakeholders (including support staff) in the

education system, participate actively throughout the diffusion process, from initiation to implementation. Unless they are assisted in this regard, it is going to be business as usual, and their classroom policies and practice will remain unchanged.

In addition, research evidence and experience with the plethora of innovations that have been introduced in the education system since the demise of apartheid, suggest that policies do not change practice, even if they are official documents. Thus, if we are serious about changing school and classroom practices, we need to consider changing the cultures within which teachers operate. Again, re-culturing (Doyle, 2002; Clarke, 2000) is a lengthy process involving continuous learning and re-learning by all stakeholders, and involves challenging their practices together, and deciding what and how to change as they move towards their new goal. Obviously, while this requires internal and external support, a contextualised, school- or cluster-based system of teacher training and organisational development is essential.

## **7.6 Implications for further research**

Like any research project, it is not possible that this study could have adequately addressed all aspects of the diffusion and implementation of EWP6 and inclusive education. This study was characterised by several limitations. One of the limitations was the fact that the design included two districts. However, these were at different stages of training teachers in the policy and practice of inclusive education. For example, the fact that the Shelley Beach district had completed theirs in 2002 – a year before data collection for this study began – meant that it was not possible to observe



their workshops. As a result, there was nothing to compare Greyville to, in terms of its approach to the task of raising awareness about EWP6 and inclusive education. On one hand, Shelley Beach's early start meant that Island View, the school located in this district, was somewhat disadvantaged by the fact that the study took place two years after they had gone through their training. On the other hand, it was an eye opener in terms of highlighting the absence of follow-up sessions and evaluations regarding training within the system. It also highlighted the fact that we cannot expect schools and teachers to put into action what they do not understand. Therefore, those involved in the professional development of teachers need to make follow-up visits to see if the content was understood, and if the skills and knowledge learned can be applied to the contexts that teachers work in.

A second limitation of the study is the size of the sample. Three schools constitute a very small-scale study. Therefore, one treads carefully when it comes to making generalisations from the findings of such a study. However, Robson (2002) citing Maxwell (1996) differentiates between internal and external generalisability. The former is applicable to the studied setting and the latter is applicable further than that setting. Had I been able to observe how Shelley Beach engaged with the process of innovation dissemination, I would have been able to make external generalisations about the two districts. But as this was not the case, the findings are only applicable to the three schools studied. However, case studies are also not meant to be generalised to a wider contexts. Instead, they provide valuable lessons for similar contexts.

The above has several implications for further research, which is still needed to understand the process of diffusion and implementation of EWP6 and inclusive education in the Greyville and Shelly Beach districts, as well as in the KwaZulu-Natal province as a whole. These are discussed below.

There is no doubt that the South African education system, in its present form, needs to change, if we are serious about providing quality education for all learners. There are numerous initiatives aimed at making this a reality, EWP6 being one of them. However, without proper training of those at the chalk face, the changes that these reforms aim to entrench will remain superficial. Doyle's (2002) research implies that most reforms do not change practice because they focus only on cosmetic structures. This suggests that in order for inclusion to take root in the South African education system, we need to revisit our teacher development programmes (both PRESET and INSET) to investigate the ways in which teachers and others in the system are being prepared for the implementation of inclusion. We also need to know if the teacher training institutions charged with this task are in touch with the realities of schools and the demands such an innovation makes on the teachers' skills and knowledge, and the school's resources, and whether this is reflected in their teacher education programmes. This is so that we can identify and develop alternatives to bridge the gap between what is available and what is needed.

To illustrate, at the institution where I work in teacher education, a student completing a four-year teaching degree (B. Ed. undergraduate) only comes into contact with

inclusion in the final year, and even then, for half a semester. Those doing the Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) have such a tight programme that they only get three 45-minute periods to familiarise themselves with inclusive education. This type of training is completely inadequate, and we cannot earnestly claim to be producing teachers who understand inclusion and who will embrace it in their schools and classrooms. Furthermore, my experience and impressions of the institution in which I work are that the very re-culturing that is required of schools, if they are to implement inclusive education effectively, is sadly lacking within the institution. Instead, teacher training continues largely within the same exclusionary cultural milieu of the past. While we require teachers in schools to work together, support each other, and to support learners as they all learn, such requirements are not met within the very institution that trains teachers. Thus, research studies are needed in the various teacher training institutions and agencies in the country, to investigate the extent to which they are preparing teachers to teach within an inclusive education system. Once the pilot project currently being implemented in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (and other provinces) is completed, it will be interesting to examine the factors that contributed to certain pilot schools' success, and others' failure to implement inclusive education. This exercise will force us to look at contextual factors relevant to each school, and see how they support or work against inclusion.

Another important issue that needs investigating is the funding and resourcing strategy that the province is planning to implement for the development of inclusive schools. For example, how will schools access financial and other material support for learner

and teacher development? If learner support is going to be based on the number of learners admitted or identified per school, then very little will change in how learners experiencing barriers to learning are viewed and treated. Instead, this will encourage schools to categorise as many learners as possible as experiencing barriers to learning and participation, with the hope of getting more allocations from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Instead, the goal should be to fund schools on the basis of outcomes achieved by such learners. Schools will also need to access funding to provide quality professional development programmes. Research is needed that investigates how this will be managed and evaluated.

The design limitations of this study (e.g. the fact that it involved a small sample of three schools) meant that it could not address all the aspects that would have shed light on what is actually taking place in schools and districts in relation to EWP6 and inclusive education. Thus, a large-scale study is needed to investigate the ways in which the provincial Department of Education and its various subsystems are managing this complex process of change, and the impact of their diffusion strategy on teachers and schools. In particular, it would be beneficial to examine the ways in which the officials in districts and the province are being trained and supported in their learning and re-learning of the innovation, and how they support schools and teachers in their own learning and implementation of inclusive education. If these officials are to provide the much-needed support to schools and other stakeholders, they need to be truly well-versed in the philosophy and practice of inclusive education themselves. Thus, they

are the backbone of this system, and we cannot compromise their development, as that would filter down to teachers' development and support.

Last, there is need for a follow-up study to map the progression of this policy formulation. Such a study could document the whole process from formulation, through to piloting, and right down to implementation and/or non-implementation of this policy. This research could further focus on what worked and what did not and why. Such documentation will provide the necessary opportunities for the system to anticipate barriers to the implementation of this policy statement and to address them timeously. In addition, such studies will help identify the resources (material and human) that are necessary for the effective implementation of inclusive education in schools.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

When I set out to undertake this study, I was convinced that the professional development of teachers was the most important innovation diffusion strategy at the disposal of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and its various subsystems. I was also convinced that teachers' experiences and understanding of the policy of inclusive education would be influenced by the nature, quantity, and quality of the professional development they are exposed to. Findings from this study seem to confirm that the success or failure of this policy depends on, among other things, the ways in which teachers are introduced to the system and prepared for its implementation. As evidenced by experience with other South African education policies, as well as findings from this study, it is unreasonable to expect the cascade

model of teacher training and development to work. Thus, the ways in which teacher educators (those offering INSET and PRESET) approach their task becomes important. Day (2004) suggests what he sees as challenges that teachers and teacher educators face, and ends with these wise words:

To develop an agenda for teacher education that focuses upon the deeper social and moral as well as instrumental purposes is to become responsive rather than reactive to change. It is to assert professional autonomy. It is to demonstrate a commitment by teacher educators to work together with teachers in more powerful alliances on agendas for understanding and improvement that take account of their immediate and longer term needs and, most importantly, those of the children they teach. (2004: 15)

Thousand and Villa (1995) cite four reasons why schools are so difficult to reform. These include: poor leadership; inadequate teacher preparation; inappropriate organisational structures, procedures and policies; and ignoring cultural aspects of schooling. The findings from this study also demonstrate the complexity of driving a reform process, particularly one as complex as inclusion, and highlight the role played by these factors. In light of these findings, it is understandable why Rogers (2003) suggests that those in leadership need to act as the champions of innovations: they openly need to support a new idea, thus discouraging resistance and indifference.

In a similar fashion to many others who have tried to clarify the role of leadership in change, I strongly believe that those in leadership positions need to have a very clear understanding of what needs to be changed and with what benefits, if the reforms are to be effective (Thousand & Villa, 1995; Morrison, 1998). Otherwise, how can stakeholders create environments that facilitate dialogue, and debate something they do not understand? This understanding is necessary, if they are to assist teachers to “see the big picture” (Thousand & Villa, 1995: 57). In the development of an inclusive

system this is even more critical because of its complexity and incongruence with existing practices (paradigm shift).

The value of pilot programmes cannot be overemphasised as they provide what Rogers (2003) calls “trialability”. For inclusive education, this trialability or piloting is very important as this system differs significantly from what has prevailed in the education system until now. However, the results derived from pilot projects should not be taken too far either, as conditions under which pilots are conducted tend to differ significantly from non-pilot conditions. That is why the one-size-fits-all strategy is doomed to fail, because it neglects to consider differences in schools’ contexts. In this vein, Fink (2000) concludes that school contexts that promote effectiveness of teachers’ and learners’ performance are those where the staff has a common understanding of what it is they are trying to achieve. Rosenholtz (1991) refers to these as high consensus schools. These are schools in which new staff members are introduced to the school’s vision, and where the head teacher supports staff and learners in their learning, and promotes a positive environment for growth (Fink, 2000: 39).

Thus – first – this thesis posits that it is not possible to develop inclusive practice in an environment that is exclusive, unless all stakeholders – particularly teachers as change agents – are brought on board as early as possible in the innovation process. In fact, it becomes more difficult to get them to accept the innovation later on. Second, changing structures (e.g. policies) in accordance with the innovation will not change the culture

of working within the system. Instead, energies should be channelled towards changing the ways teachers think about teaching and learning, and how learners can be supported in their learning. Third, it is difficult to change teachers' thinking about their work if they do not get adequate opportunities to engage with the innovation – individually and collaboratively – so as to question, re-shape, and learn new ways of thinking and doing. Fourth, different levels of the education system (e.g. the various directorates and units) should not have impermeable boundaries so that information does not flow between and among them. If they do, it becomes very difficult to articulate their agendas and to provide each other with the necessary support during times of transition.

If the issues raised above are not taken into consideration, the Ministry of Education will have very little success in changing schools significantly. It is time that the Ministry supports the development of learning schools, where both teachers and learners collaborate in their learning, where teachers support learners, and each other, and where teachers are supported by their districts in their quest for new knowledge. Education is not a sport where only one player or team wins. In education, we must play differently by facilitating all players' participation and development, and we must adopt rules that create winners. We can no longer continue to justify a system in which so many participants are destined to be losers. If this policy statement does not protect the marginalised and the excluded by failing to eradicate the manifold barriers to learning, development, and participation, the biggest losers will be our children – South Africa's future – and that is something we cannot afford.



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## Appendix A



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL  
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO  
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

HEAD OFFICE	INHLOKO HHOVISI	HOOFKANTOOR
ADDRESS: EX-DURBAN COLLEGE OF IKHELI: EDUCATION ADRES: CNR. NICHOLSON ROAD AND QUEEN MARY AVENUE UMBILO	PRIVATE BAG: X05 ISIKHWAMA: ROSSBURGH SEPOSI: 4072 PRIVAATSAK:	TELEPHONE: 031 2744921 UCINGO: TELEFOON: FAX: 031 2744922
ENQUIRIES: P.T. ZUNGU IMIBUZO: NAVRAE:	REFERENCE: INKOMBA: VERWYSING:	Permission : Reserach DATE: 29 January 2004 USUKU: DATUM:

**RE: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

### To whom it may concern

This is to serve as a notice that **Sithabile Ntombela** has been granted permission to conduct research with the following terms and conditions:

- That as a researcher, she/he **must** present a copy of the written approval from the Department to the Head of the Institution concerned before any research may be undertaken at a departmental institution.
- The attached list of schools are the schools she/he has been granted permission to conduct research in. however, it must be noted that the schools are not obligated to participate in the research if it is not a KZNDEC project.
- **Sithabile Ntombela** has been granted special permission to conduct her/his research during official contact times, as it is believed that her/his presence would not interrupt **education programmes**. Should education programmes be interrupted, she/he must, therefore, conduct his/her research during nonofficial contact times.
- No school is expected to participate in the research during the fourth school term, as this is the critical period for schools to focus on their exams.

Comments:

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**Phandiwe Zungu**  
Deputy Director: Research, Strategy, Policy Development

Comments:

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**B H Mthabela**  
Director: Research, Strategy Development and ECMIS

## Appendix B



RESEARCH OFFICE (FRANCIS STOCK BUILDING)  
HOWARD COLLEGE  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587

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16 MAY 2005

MS. S NTOMBELA  
EDUCATION

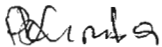
Dear Ms. Ntombela

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/05/040

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Addressing issues of diversity in S. A. Schools: A case study of teachers' perceptions of the policy of inclusive education and training"

Yours faithfully



MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA  
RESEARCH OFFICE

PS: The following general condition is applicable to all projects that have been granted ethical clearance:

THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVAL SHOULD THE RESEARCH INVOLVE UTILIZATION OF SPACE AND/OR FACILITIES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS. WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES ARE USED IN THE PROJECT, THE RESEARCHER SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE INCLUDES A SECTION AT THE END WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT (PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE) INDICATING THAT HE/SHE WAS INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

cc. Faculty Officer  
cc. Supervisor

## Appendix C

### Teachers' Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. The purpose of the study is to establish teachers' perceptions and experiences of the policy of Inclusive Education and Training, adopted in July 2001. The information you supply will be treated as confidential. Please take time to answer this questionnaire, there are no right or wrong answers.

#### A. Biographical information

1. Position held at school: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Qualification(s): \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Highest Standard Passed at school: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Professional/Post Matric Qualifications: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Sex: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Age: 21-30 \_\_\_\_\_ 31-40 \_\_\_\_\_ 41-50 \_\_\_\_\_ 51-60 \_\_\_\_\_ 61+ \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. School/ Work related Information

1. Which grade(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What subjects/learning areas? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In your school, what is discussed in the following meetings:
  - a. Subject/learning area meetings \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Grade meetings \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Staff meetings \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you and your colleagues know about inclusion? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

5. If yes, how did you hear about it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Has inclusion been discussed in any of these meetings?

Grade /subject meetings \_\_\_\_\_ staff meetings \_\_\_\_\_ district meetings \_\_\_\_\_

7. Does the school have its own policy on 'inclusion'? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If yes, briefly describe it here:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. How do you cater for learner differences in your teaching?

a) I give them different tasks \_\_\_\_\_

b) I give others more time to complete tasks \_\_\_\_\_

c) I teach them in groups using different methods \_\_\_\_\_

d) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. If some learners are not coping with class work, do you:

a) carry on as usual and hope they will catch up \_\_\_\_\_

b) try to find out the source of the problem and deal with it \_\_\_\_\_

c) give them more homework \_\_\_\_\_

d) seek advice from colleagues \_\_\_\_\_

e) other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Are there any learners with disabilities in your class? \_\_\_\_\_ at school? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What sort of disabilities? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you think these disabilities interfere with their learning? \_\_\_\_\_

13. If yes, in what way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Did you attend any in-service (staff development) course in 2003?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (if no, go to question 17).

15. Was it organised by:

a. An NGO? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

c. The Circuit or District? \_\_\_\_\_

d. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Was inclusion or inclusive education discussed at that course? \_\_\_\_\_

17. In your opinion, what do you think inclusive education or inclusion is about?

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---

---

18. Can this system of education be implemented in your school? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Why do you think so? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

20. What resources do you think are needed for this system to work in your school? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

The end.

Thank you so much for your time.

## Appendix D

### Focus Group Interviews

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to this group interview. Thank you for your time and assistance in this project. The purpose of this study is to find out teachers' awareness and understanding of inclusion. All the recording that we are doing will be used by myself only. Once the analysis is complete, the tapes will be destroyed.

Before we start, I would like to state a few rules that all us need to observe.

- Whatever is said in this interview is confidential and should not be repeated outside of this meeting.
- All of you have opinions that are important for this study. It is important that you all say what you think about the topic/s discussed (even if its different).
- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Give each other a chance to speak
- Show respect for one another.

I am going to read one scenario at a time and then I would like you to discuss the following:

- a) Do you have such learners in this school?
- b) Should such learners be admitted in your school?
- c) How would you deal with these learner's educational needs?
- d) What skills do you think are necessary to teach such learners?
- e) Are you familiar with White Paper 6 (policy of inclusion)?
- f) Do you think it will/can address problems of learners such as these?
- g) Do you think inclusive education can be successfully implemented in your school? Please explain your answers.

#### Scenario 1

Tofo is a 10 year old girl in grade 3 at Cato Manor Primary School. She has struggled with schoolwork since she started school five years ago. Her performance is very erratic. Sometimes she seems bright and alert, giving intelligent answers in oral situations and at other times she rushes to answer without thinking things through. Her reading is very slow and inaccurate. Often she misreads and muddles up the sounds in a work, reading naby for byna and some for same. She also leaves out words and sometimes whole lines and then struggles to understand what she has read. Her spelling shows similar mistakes and her writing is untidy. She still confuses capitals and small letters and finds it difficult to arrange her work on the page which causes her great difficulties in mathematics. These difficulties affect her work in other areas, too.

#### Scenario 2

Sean is 12 although he looks like a 10 year old. He is in grade 4 at Mahlabathini Combined School. He spends most of his time wandering around the school, watching what is going on in other classrooms. Three times last term he was found in the streets nearby and was brought back to school by local business people. He likes "writing" but is not able to even copy simple words. He loves all TV shows and he can relate them accurately. Generally he is quiet but there are times when he is aggressive and hits children who tease him.

## Appendix E

### Principals' questionnaire (School audit).

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. The purpose of the study is to establish teachers' perceptions and experiences of the policy of Inclusive Education and Training, adopted in July 2001. Please take a few minutes to answer this questionnaire. The information you supply will be treated in the strictest confidence.

- a. Number of teachers (including principal): \_\_\_\_\_
- b. How many teachers have:
1. M+2 or below: \_\_\_\_\_
  2. M+3: \_\_\_\_\_
  3. M+4 and above: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. . Number of support staff: \_\_\_\_\_
1. Admin staff: \_\_\_\_\_
  2. General assistants: \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Male teachers \_\_\_\_\_ Female teachers \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Number of learners on the roll: \_\_\_\_\_
- Female \_\_\_\_\_
- Male \_\_\_\_\_
- Racial composition:
- African: \_\_\_\_\_
- Indian: \_\_\_\_\_
- Coloured: \_\_\_\_\_
- White: \_\_\_\_\_
- g. How many classrooms? \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Teacher/learner ratio? \_\_\_\_\_
- i. How many offices? \_\_\_\_\_
- Used by \_\_\_\_\_
- j. How many telephone lines? \_\_\_\_\_
- k. Running water? \_\_\_\_\_
- l. Electricity? \_\_\_\_\_

- m. Ablution blocks? \_\_\_\_\_  
 number used by female learners \_\_\_\_\_  
 number used by male learners \_\_\_\_\_  
 used by staff \_\_\_\_\_
- n. Staff room/s? \_\_\_\_\_
- o. Is there enough room for all staff in the staff room?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- p. Is there a library/ media centre? \_\_\_\_\_
- q. Do you have adequate supply of books? \_\_\_\_\_
- r. Do you have playgrounds? \_\_\_\_\_  
 soccer \_\_\_\_\_  
 netball \_\_\_\_\_  
 other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- s. Which grades are catered for at this school?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- t. What teaching equipment is available to teachers?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- u. How is it controlled?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- v. On average, how many staff meetings are held:  
 1. per week : \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. per month? \_\_\_\_\_
- w. Do these meetings include all staff or do you have separate meetings for support staff?
- x. Do you keep agendas and minutes ?
- y. What is the official organogram of your school (who reports to whom)?

Thank you.



## Appendix F

### Principals' Interview

Thank you for your time. Your identity and that of your school will remain anonymous. Once transcribed, a copy of this interview will be made available to you to check. If there are things you wish to discuss further or change then, please feel free to do so.

1. Has your school received a copy of Education White paper 6? (or, have you heard of the new policy of inclusion?)
2. What do you think is the essence of this policy document?
3. How has your school responded to this policy document? What has happened since you received this document? (school discussions or workshops; district discussions/workshops)
4. Have you been invited to any workshop/meeting where this document was discussed? Who organised that meeting? Was it useful? In what ways?
5. Has your school started implementing this policy? Please explain.
6. Is there a staff development program at this school? Please tell me about it. (What is covered? Who decides what is covered? Who facilitates? Who attends?)
7. What is District Support Services? Where is yours? What do they do? How often does your school interact with them?
8. Which office do you approach the most for advice and support? Why that one?
9. Do they give your problems the attention they deserve? Please give an example.
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about inclusion?

Thank You.

## Appendix G

### Office-based officials' interview

Thank you for your time. The purpose of this research project is to find out teachers' perceptions and experiences of the policy of Inclusive Education and Training, adopted in July 2001. Your identity and that of your circuit or district will remain anonymous. Once transcribed, a copy of this interview will be available to you to endorse. If there are things you wish to discuss further or change then, please feel free to do so.

1. Have you received or seen a copy of Education White Paper 6?
2. What do you think it is about?
3. Please take me through the process of what happens once a new policy document is received by your office. (how are schools, circuits and districts informed? Who decides on implementation issues? How soon is this done?)
4. If the new policy is introducing reforms, what do you do?
5. Are schools aware of this policy? How is this ensured?
6. What is the current stage of implementation of this policy in your circuit, district or province?
7. Are there any barriers to, or successes in, implementation? Please explain.
8. What support and development opportunities are available to in your area? (Managerial support and development; school and teachers' support and development?)
9. How do they access these?
10. How do you ensure the support offered is appropriate? ( do you do needs analysis per school/ circuit/ district)?
11. If your office experiences difficulties of any sort, who supports it? Can you give examples.
12. Do you believe that an inclusive education and training system will work in your area? Please explain why you think so.

Thank You.

## Appendix H



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL  
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO  
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

eTHEKWINI REGION		ISIFUNDA SASETHEKWINI		eTHEKWINI STREEK	
Address:	<b>PINETOWN DISTRICT</b>	Private Bag:	<b>Private Bag X9001</b>	Telephone:	<b>(031) 7162700</b>
Ikheli:	<b>41 Voortrekker Street</b>	Isikhwama:	<b>Pinetown</b>	Ucinco:	
Adres:	<b>Ashley</b>	Sepost:		Telefoon:	
		Privaatsak:	<b>3600</b>	Fax:	<b>(031) 7026382</b>
Enquiries:	<b>J Perumal</b>	Reference:		Date:	
Imibuzo:		Inkombaba:		Usuku:	<b>2004-02-24</b>
Navrae:		Verwysing:		Datum:	

### CIRCULAR NO. PD 04/2004

**TO: Circuit Managers and SEM's  
Principals – Mainstream & Special Schools  
One member of the SMT or Teacher Representation  
Chaipersons of School Governing Bodies  
ECD, ABET Personnel  
TLS Personnel**

### ADVOCACY PROGRAMME : BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

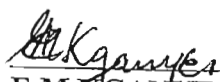
Internationally there is a shift from a medical model to a social rights model of education. Legislation both nationally and internationally is underpinned by a social rights discourse which requires a shift in thinking towards Inclusive Education. The South African Education White Paper 6 was launched in July 2001 and the implementation process is in progress.

The Psychological, Guidance and Special Education Services [PGSES] of the Department of Education, Pinetown District, is embarking on an advocacy programme to acquaint you with the policy of Inclusive Education as enunciated in White Paper 6 and to take you through the implementation plan.

It is imperative that the principal and staff representative and one member of the SGB attend this programme as the implementation process requires collaboration by all stakeholders in education.

#### CIRCUIT: CITY OF DURBAN

WARD	DATE	TIME	VENUE
Kwasanti	15:03:04	8:30 - 11:30	Pinetown District Hall
Kranskloof	23:03:04	8:30 - 11:30	
Ndengezi	24:03:04	8:30 - 11:30	
Westville	25:03:03	8:30 - 11:30	

  
**E M KGANYE**  
**DISTRICT DIRECTOR**  
*c:Notice/nc*



eTHEKWINI REGION

ISIFUNDA SASETHEKWINI

eTHEKWINI STREEK

 Address: PINETOWN DISTRICT  
 Ikheli: 41 Voortrekker Street  
 Adres: Ashley

 Private Bag: Private Bag X9001  
 Isikhwama Sepaat: Pinetown  
 Privaatsak: 3800

 Telephone: (031) 7162700  
 Ucinco:  
 Telefoon:  
 Fax: (031) 7026382

 Enquiries:  
 Imibuzo: S Singh  
 Navrae: K Naidoo

 Reference:  
 Inkomba:  
 Verwysing:

 Date:  
 Uaukur: 15 March 2004  
 Datum:

**PD CIRCULAR NO.: 13 OF 2004**

**TO: PRINCIPALS OF PRIMARY AND PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS  
 GRADE R EDUCATORS  
 (SCHOOLS THAT DO NOT HAVE GRADE R UNITS ARE REQUESTED TO  
 SEND ONE GRADE ONE EDUCATOR TO THE WORKSHOP)**

**WORKSHOP FOR GRADE R EDUCATORS ON: 'EARLY INTERVENTION FOR  
 LEARNERS EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO LEARNING'**

Research has shown that early identification and the implementation of early intervention services to learners 'at-risk' of developmental difficulties, is highly effective in enhancing the wholistic development of these children. The PGSES, Pinetown District, Education Therapy Services are, therefore, embarking on a project aimed at empowering all Grade R educators to assist learners who display barriers to learning.

You are invited to participate in a hands on workshop aimed at encouraging reflective teaching practices, the details of which are as follows:

CIRCUIT	WARD	VENUE	DATE	TIME
Hammersdale	Mngeni Valley Molweni	Pinetown District Hall	13/05	12h30 - 15h00
	Inchanga Mpumalanga	Kwathintwa	20/05	
Kwa Mashu	Malandela Phoenix West	V N Naik	25/05	12h30 - 15h00
	Inanda North	Kwa Mashu Teachers' Centre	27/05	
	Ntuzuma	Kwa Mashu Teachers' Centre	01/06	

-2-

CIRCUIT	WARD	VENUE	DATE	TIME
Phoenix	Phoenix Central Phoenix North	Phoenix Teachers' Centre	03/06	12h30 - 15h00
	Tongaat Verulam	Tongaat Teachers' Centre	10/06	
City of Durban	Ndengezi Kwa Santi	Pinetown District Hall	08/06	12h30 - 15h00
	Kranskloof Westville		15/06	

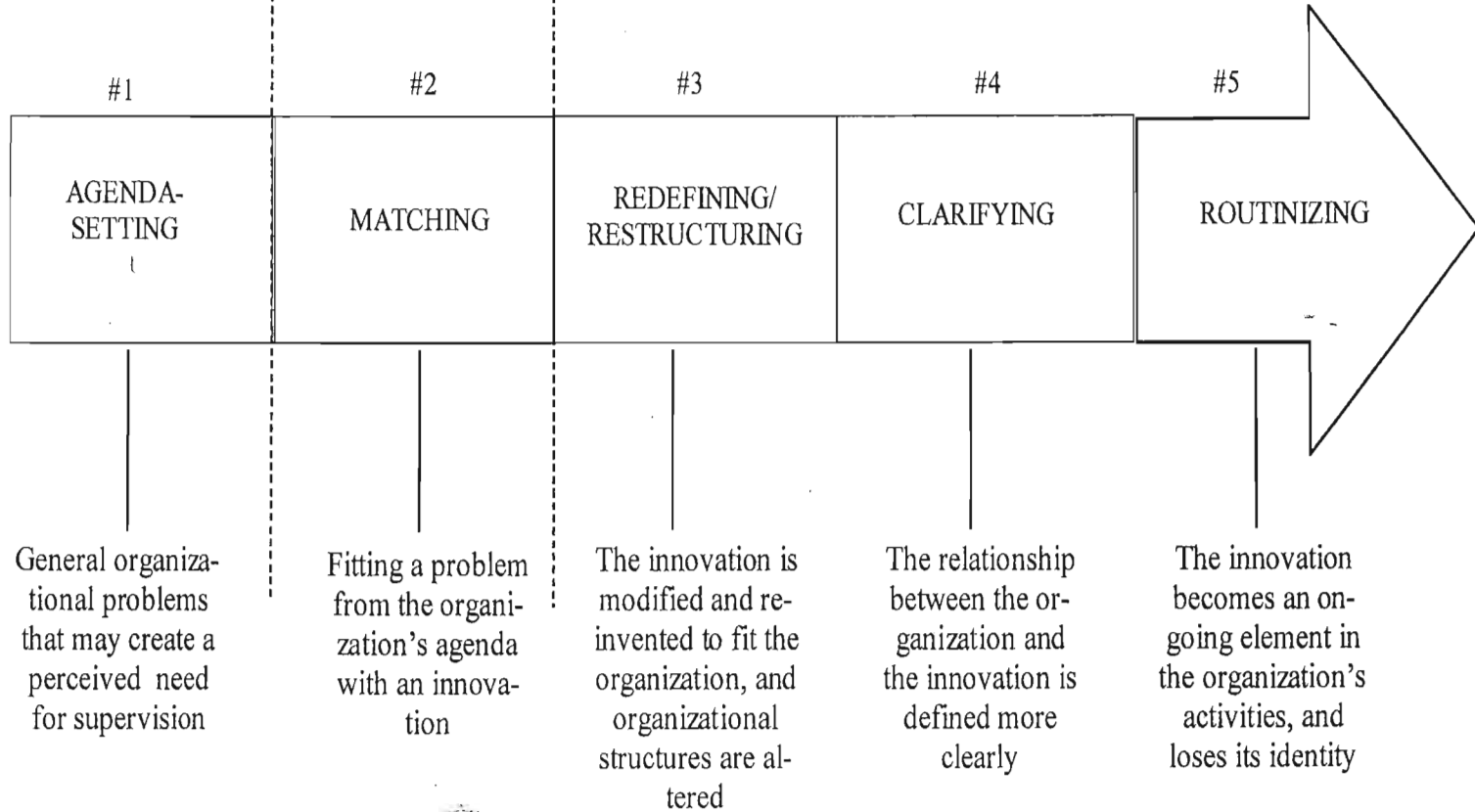
- NB:**
1. Attempts to obtain procurement for refreshments have been made. However, this is not guaranteed. Please carry a light snack.
  2. Please contact the Pinetown District Office if you have any queries.

  
**E. M. KGANYE**  
**DIRECTOR: PINETOWN DISTRICT**

THE INNOVATION PROCESS  
IN AN ORGANIZATION

I. INITIATION

II. IMPLEMENTATION



Appendix I

## Appendix J

### Reports given to schools

#### A. Mangelengele Primary School

The following were found to have an effect on how this policy is perceived and will probably influence how it is interpreted and implemented at this school:

1. Human Resources: Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) affected Mangelengele Primary School. This school lost a management post and gained a level 1 post.
2. Physical Resources: There is no shortage of teaching space, and there are adequate teaching and learning facilities at this school. These include a television set, a photocopier, a computer, a printer and several shelves with reference and reading materials. However, I got the impression that most of these were under utilized. The media centre, for example, is a very useful resource for both learning and teaching but I never saw it used in any way during my visits to this school.
3. In-class support: In response to the questionnaire, all teachers claimed that they do attend to learners experiencing difficulties during class time. This was not so audible during the focus group interview.
4. Within school support: There are several meetings that are convened to discuss school and grade matters. Sometimes learners experiencing difficulties in their learning are discussed at these meetings. There is no forum for addressing issues of learner and/or teacher support.
5. District support: It is clear that the district is not visible. During the course of this study, the principal seemed to be struggling with getting an administrative assistant. There was a sense of disappointment that what the district promises on paper is not what it delivers.
6. Understanding of Inclusion: There seems to be a misunderstanding of what inclusive education is about. Most teachers seemed to think that inclusion is about bringing children with disabilities into the mainstream. This is not quite correct but unfortunately, attitudes are informed by what people know. If any reform is to succeed, it is important that those expected to implement it understand quite well what they are expected to implement otherwise it is doomed to fail. It is the department of education's responsibility to ensure that all schools understand what inclusive education is and why there is a need to shift to this kind of education system. In the light of the current scenario (when this responsibility is not taken seriously), schools have to find ways to equip themselves for the tasks ahead if they are to succeed.

7. Special classes: There are no special classes at this school.
  
8. Conclusion: My conclusion was that this school is not ready to implement inclusive education because of lack of clarity of purpose about the new policy, absence of guidelines on how to proceed, and invisibility of support. The school is not against inclusion as such but it would be impossible to proceed at this stage unless teachers are developed to the level where they understand what inclusive education is and what its objectives are.

## B. Zungeza Primary School

The following were found to have an effect on how this policy is perceived and will probably influence how it is interpreted and implemented at this school:

1. Human Resources: Like the other schools, Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) affected Zungeza Primary School. The school lost two level one posts and gained 2 management posts. These were later reversed when the PPN came under fire.
  
2. Physical Resources: There is a chronic shortage of teaching and learning space at this school. There was a promise of five or six classrooms in 1999 but nothing has happened since. As a result, the school has acquired prefabricated structures that are not conducive to teaching and learning. Learners are crammed in these classrooms and there is no space for any movement once the learners settle down.

Other than space shortage, there are adequate facilities at this school (computers, photocopier, and books). However, I got the impression that these were not adequately used. On further enquiry, I learnt that the school had not been supplied with stationery for the past two years (2003 and 2004), as a result, the school had no printing paper. From the report of the school staff, there are problems in dealing with the procurement section; documents disappear and staff turnover is high which makes it difficult to get results on your queries. The internet is another example. It is a very useful resource for both learning and teaching but it is under utilized because teachers do not have the skills to surf.

3. In-class support: In response to the questionnaire, all teachers claimed that they do attend to learners experiencing difficulties during class time. This was also audible during the focus group interview. Learners who are identified as in need of additional support are sometimes kept back after school for supplementary instruction.
  
4. Within school support: There are several meetings, formal and informal, that are convened as forum for teacher support. The school seems to be well organized in terms of meeting the needs of its learners and teachers are aware of these. Some of the support structures are not formal structures, for example, sometimes



teachers negotiate with each other about where the learner will find the best support for the challenges experienced.

- 5 District support: It is clear that the district is not visible. The principal seems to have given up on the availability of the district team. During the group interview, teachers did refer to it as a not very useful office, particularly the PGSES Unit. This is worrying as this vote of no confidence in the District, particularly the PGSES unit spells trouble for the development of inclusive practice. Fortunately, the school has already utilized readily available resources in a manner that enhances the learning context for both learners and teachers. This is in line with the policy of inclusion.
- 6 Understanding of Inclusion: There seemed to be a misunderstanding of what inclusive education is about. Most teachers seemed to think that inclusion is about bringing children with disabilities into the mainstream. This is not quite correct but unfortunately, that is what people think. If any reform is to succeed, it is important that those expected to implement it understand quite well what they are expected to implement otherwise it is doomed to fail. It is the department of education's responsibility to ensure that all schools understand what inclusive education is and why there is a need to shift to this kind of education system. In the light of the current scenario (when this responsibility is not taken seriously), schools have to find ways to equip themselves for the tasks ahead if they are to succeed.
- 7 Special classes: There are no special classes at this school.
- 8 Conclusion: My conclusion was that this school is already grappling with inclusion, albeit in an ad hoc and deficit oriented manner. For example, the barrier to learning caused by inadequate mastery of the language of instruction has been minimized through the introduction of SMILE, an interactive language program. Another example is the existence of an institutional support team that attempts to address barriers to learning and participation. Although the school seems ready to implement inclusive education, everybody still needs to be developed to a state where they have a clear understanding of what this type of education is. At the moment, only the principal (through her studies) is well informed about this policy.

### C. Island View Primary School

- 1 Human Resources: This school also lost two level one teachers.
- 2 Physical Resources: There are adequate facilities. It is hoped that they are put to good use.
- 3 In-class support : In response to the questionnaire, all teachers claimed that they do attend to learners experiencing difficulties during class time. However, in the interview, this was not so audible. Instead, there seem to be an over reliance on the psychologist that has an arrangement with the school. This seems to be problematic as not all learners can afford the psychologist's fees.
- 4 Within school support: There are several meetings (grade and learning area) but none of them seem to be used as a support forum for teachers struggling to meet the educational needs of some learners.
- 5 District support: It was clear that the district is not visible. The principal seems to have given up on the availability of the district team. The teachers also never referred to it. This means that as a school, you need to look at readily available resources (experienced teachers and those with special expertise, or even friends of the school) to form a school-based support forum. This is in line with the policy of inclusion.
- 6 Understanding of Inclusion: There seems to be a misunderstanding of what inclusive education is about. Most teachers seem to think that inclusion is about having learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The department has not given these teachers the knowledge they need to understand and prepare for inclusive education. It is important that we understand what we are expected to implement if we are to implement it properly. It is the department of education's responsibility to ensure that all schools understand what they are to implement, but when this responsibility is shacked, schools have to find ways to equip themselves for the tasks ahead
- 7 Special classes: I only managed to observe one special class. I do not know how learners are assigned to these classes but I got the impression that their biggest barrier to learning was an inadequately developed language of learning and teaching (English). In my opinion, this is a short-term barrier.
- 8 Conclusion: My conclusion was that this school is not yet ready to implement inclusive education because of lack of clarity of purpose about the new policy, absence of guidelines on how to proceed, and invisibility of support. As a result of these missing links, perceptions tended to be against inclusion.