

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF A REMEDIAL TEACHER TO  
A SUPPORT TEACHER: A CASE-STUDY OF A PRIMARY  
SCHOOL IN PINETOWN**

**BY**

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**The learners for their willing participation in this research.**

**The principal of the school where the research took place.**

# DECLARATION

I declare that:

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF A REMEDIAL TEACHER TO A SUPPORT  
TEACHER: A CASE-STUDY OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN PINETOWN**

is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

SIGNED:

*Msichu*

DATED:

14 : 12 : 2007

# **THE CHANGING ROLE OF A REMEDIAL TEACHER TO A SUPPORT TEACHER: A CASE-STUDY OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN PINETOWN**

by

**Shakuntala Naidu**

## **ABSTRACT**

Inclusion is not only about philosophy but more importantly about the practical changes that must be brought about in order to help all learners in our school system to excel and unfold their potential. Inclusive education can be seen as an approach that aims to transform our education system in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment. Good teaching is good for all learners, irrespective of their differences and improved teacher training and on-going professional teacher support may be one of the most important strategies to create quality education for all.

This research seeks to understand how a remedial teacher negotiated her role to that of a support teacher and to explore her experiences in providing support to a greater number of learners and teachers. This study was conducted at a primary school in Pinetown. A qualitative approach was used in conducting this research. Data for this study was gathered from the support teacher in an unstructured interview as well as participant observation during the support programme and from some learners in a focus group interview. Willing learners, currently in the grade four support programme were used in the focus group interview. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and analysed. The findings of this research indicate that negotiating her role from a remedial teacher to a support teacher afforded her the opportunity to utilize her expertise, specialist knowledge and experience effectively and cost-efficiently in an ordinary primary school to extend the support to a greater number of learners with computer-aided assistance and to provide support to teachers to manage all learners in a mainstream classroom.

## **KEYWORDS**

- Remedial Teacher
- Support Teacher
- Inclusive education
- Teacher
- Diversity
- Barriers to learning

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

DoE	Department of Education
NCESS	National Committee on Educational Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Educational Needs
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
IST	Institutionalized Support Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
LSA	Learning Support Assistant

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## **A STORY OF SUCCESS**

This is a story of success as related by Mrs. More, the participating teacher in this research. There are many benefits of reading, especially the role it can play in improving academic achievements. A few years ago this was confirmed in an unexpected and unusual way by two learners. Both learners were in my remedial and support teaching group. I used a computer reading programme in my support programme. Peter and Keroshni (not their real names) were in grade two and I taught them in a small group. Both of them seemed to be underachieving in reading and written expression. In the beginning of their grade three year their teachers (they were in separate classes) wanted them to continue with the support work as we thought there was still room for improvement. As there were others in need of individual teaching in the group of about ten as well, I set Peter and Keroshni to work on a computerized reading programme that I had recently acquired for remedial work. While they happily worked away, I spent most of my time on the other learners requiring individual attention. I did however monitor both the learners as they worked. Now for the surprise part: at the end of each year an internal writing competition is held at our school. All the learners write a story which is then sent to an outside adjudicator who chooses the winner. Usually the winner is announced at the prize-giving function at the end of the year. And lo and behold, Peter and Keroshni were both announced as winners in the JP department. We have never had a tie in this competition before. In my opinion I think that those learners did benefit from the support programme that I offered at school. I am convinced that the computers and the reading programme had been valuable tools in the success that these two learners had achieved.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIM, RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND COURSE OF STUDY

*The secret of education lies in respecting the learner*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years the issue of inclusion has been at the centre of many discussions, with emphasis on the ‘rights of all pupils’ to be educated in a mainstream school wherever possible (Farrell, 2000: 1). Grounded in UNESCO’s education policy, adopted at the Salamanca Conference in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), inclusive education is progressively being accepted as an effectual means by which biased attitudes towards learners with disabilities may be reduced (Subban & Sharma, 2006: 42). This view is strongly endorsed in The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994: 52), which has had a major impact on shaping education policy development in many countries, including South Africa. As stated in the second paragraph of The Salamanca Statement, “Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system” (UNESCO, 1994: 48). Furthermore, the policy of inclusive education stipulates that all learners have the right to access a learning environment that values, respects and accommodates diversity and that provides education appropriate to the learners’ needs within an integrated system of education (Bothma, Gravett & Swart, 2000: 200).

According to Dyson (2000: 76), inclusion as a process can be justified by reference to the right of children to “an education” and, moreover, to an education that is made available alongside the majority of their peers. According to Naicker (2006: 1), inclusive education in South Africa, through the publication of the policy document

Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001) set out to create a single education system for all learners within a twenty year period. He reiterates the need to move towards an inclusive model where all learners experience success, hence the paradigm shift to a single inclusive system of education based on a rights model (Naicker, 2000b: 2). With a flexible curriculum in place, suitable structures of support and collaboration, each learner could progress according to his or her potential and could work at a suitable and appropriate level. Each individual could experience success according to his or her ability. Naicker (2000b: 2) further maintains that a central feature of transformation will mean moving personnel from specialist departments to regular education settings. A typical example would be that of a remedial teacher. Previously, the remedial teacher was responsible for identifying learners experiencing specific learning disabilities and then working with them, most often individually and on a withdrawal basis, to remediate their difficulties and to maximize the actualization of their potential. Furthermore, remediation previously tended to be individualistic, based on a medical model, and the services offered were rather fragmented and inadequate, as will be explained further on (William, 2000: 3).

Until 1994, different educational support services in South Africa were managed by racially segregated education departments and service provision was characterized by glaring inequalities and inconsistencies, a lack of co-ordination, and a lack of national focus and clarity on the nature of support services (Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff & Swart, 2004: 1). In addition to unequal distribution of services, embedded was the belief that the learner with the deficit was the problem, rather than the curriculum and teaching and learning environment (DoE, 2001: 5). However since 1994, South Africa began reconceptualising education provisioning. The policy document Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001: 16), acknowledges that all children and youth can learn and that all learners are different and have different needs. As such, inclusive education and training is deemed appropriate as it could provide various levels and kinds of support to learners. Hence the establishment of an inclusive education system in South Africa requires the development of appropriate support services at both a school and district level. Recent policy documents in South Africa propose that such a support system should take a

systemic approach utilizing district support teams that focus on management and personnel support rather than providing direct face to face interventions for individual learners (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2004: 1). Furthermore, schools need to provide support services in a natural setting, thereby minimizing the likelihood of separating children with difficulties from their peers and reducing stigmatizing. Support services are important in a process of social transition, and need to be integrated into current mainstream education structures. According to Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (1997: 68), the development of effective and appropriate Education Support Services will be vital in facilitating this process.

In this regard Engelbrecht (1997), cited in Campher (2000: 5), states that collaboration in inclusive education offers the opportunity to capitalize on the diverse and specialized knowledge of specialists, such as the remedial teacher and enables schools to provide quality learning support for all of their learners. Prior to 1994, certain schools had a specialist remedial teacher who worked with individual learners, on a one to one basis, and on a withdrawal system. This has since been deemed as time-consuming, not cost-effective and inadequate (DoE, 2001: 5), especially at present, since many children need help. Such a 'pull-out' system promoted stigmatization and labeling among learners. By capitalizing on the expertise and extensive knowledge of the remedial teacher, it is possible to utilize this teacher to become the support teacher to help learners experiencing difficulties, within the school. This changing role will also allow indirect service delivery by providing support to all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met (DoE, 2001: 17).

In this research project, I will explore structures for the provision of support for the paradigm shift from a fragmented deficit model of adjustment towards a holistic systems model of change. Furthermore, Naicker (2000a: 3) argues that the rights model moves away from a pathological assumption, an individual deficit model theory and institutional discrimination. I will also explore the skills of the remedial teacher and how it can be effectively utilized to full benefit as a school support teacher. I will explore how a greater number of learners are helped systematically and how intervention is enhanced for learners experiencing difficulties by using computers.

## **1.2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aim of this investigation is to explore how a remedial teacher negotiated her role to a support teacher, in keeping with current educational policy documents in South Africa. This investigation will also explore how a greater number of learners experiencing barriers to learning can be supported directly and indirectly within a school.

### **1.2.1 Primary aim**

This research is aimed at exploring the experiences of the remedial teacher as she negotiated her role to that of a support teacher, within the South African inclusive education policy framework.

### **1.2.2 Secondary aims**

1.2.2.1 To explore how she negotiated her role to that of a support teacher.

1.2.2.2 To explore how school support benefits teachers, as well as learners experiencing learning difficulties.

1.2.2.3 To explore how computer technology could extend the support rendered.

## **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Inclusive education has grown from the belief that education is a basic human right and it provides the foundation for a more just society. All learners have a right to education, regardless of their individual characteristics or difficulties. In moving towards inclusive schooling, a greater diversity of learners is found in more classrooms. Greater numbers of learners are experiencing barriers to learning therefore there is a need to provide suitable and appropriate support on a systemic scale. The support provided needs to be carried out within the school. The support needs to be effective but at the same time cost saving. It should involve changes in the approaches of teaching; a common vision that includes all children with a conviction that it is the responsibility of the school to support all teachers to educate all learners.

### **1.3.1 Primary research question**

1.3.1.1 What are the experiences of the remedial teacher as she negotiated her role to that of a support teacher, within the South African inclusive education policy framework?

### **1.3.2 Secondary research questions**

1.3.2.1 How did the remedial teacher negotiate and change her role from a remedial teacher to a support teacher?

1.3.2.2 How does her support benefit teachers as well as learners that are experiencing learning difficulties.

1.3.2.3 How can computer technology extend the possible support rendered?

## **1.4 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

### **1.4.1 Inclusive education**

Inclusive education can be defined as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners. The separate systems of education, namely “special” and “ordinary” are integrated to provide one system that is able to recognize and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population. Inclusive education is concerned with providing quality education for all with special emphasis on learners who experience barriers to learning and development (UNESCO, 1994: 5).

### **1.4.2 Remedial teacher**

A remedial teacher is a trained specialist in the field of remedial education whose designated task is to help learners overcome their learning difficulties by providing suitable intervention and support. A remedial teacher helps to correct or improve deficient skills in learners, enabling the learner to ‘fit’ in the mainstream.

### **1.4.3 School-based support teacher**

The support teacher provides support in an inclusive education setting for other teachers as well as for learners experiencing barriers to learning. At present any teacher can be a support teacher as long as they are willing and have extensive experience in teaching.

### **1.4.4 Primary school**

A primary school can be explained as a school for young learners usually in the first grades, from grade one to grade seven. It is the first of a child's formal education where the elementary subjects are taught.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.5.1 Research design**

This research will be approached from an interpretive, explorative, descriptive and contextual design. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995: 78), the purpose of an exploratory study is to investigate little understood phenomena, which in my research, is aimed at gaining insight into the experiences of the remedial teacher and to understand how she negotiated her role to a support teacher, as well as to explore how school support benefits teachers as well as learners experiencing learning difficulties.

For this research a case study will be carried out at Sunnyside Primary School (not the real name of the school) in Pinetown. According to Cohen & Manion (1994: 79), a case study is appropriate and suitable when a researcher wants to understand specific situations. A case study is designed to illustrate 'the study of an instance in action' (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 79). The single instance in this case, is a school. Case studies provide a unique example of real people in real situations enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles.

According to Fouché and Delport (1998: 79) a qualitative paradigm lends itself to an interpretative approach and aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. The qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions. It also produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words. As the researcher I will be concerned with understanding rather than explanation. Methods such as semi-structured interviewing, focus group interviewing, participant observation and document analysis will be used to acquire an in-depth knowledge and will be used to further guide this study.

## **1.5.2 Research methodology**

### **1.5.2.1 Sample**

The sample for this research will be the support teacher, complemented by learners currently in the support programme at Sunnyside Primary School in Pinetown. Both boys and girls currently in grade four, who are available and willing to participate in the study will be interviewed. Ethical clearance will be sought from the university.

### **1.5.2.2 Data collection**

Methods such as un-structured interviewing, focus group interviewing, participant observation using an observation schedule and document analysis of assessment tests will be used to guide this study. The un-structured interviews will be utilized to collect data from the support teacher, and the focus group interview will be used to collect data from the learners. Responses will be recorded on a tape recorder and transcribed accounts of the interviews will form the primary data (Greeff, 1998: 299, 305). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 673), participant observation is described as being fundamental to all research methods. De Vos (1998: 280) describes participant observation as a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday setup in a particular community or situation. In addition I will access the scores from the assessment tests to explore the effect of the support offered by the support teacher.

### **1.5.2.3 Data analysis**

The interview with the support teacher, as well as the focus group interview will be analyzed using Tesch's method of open coding to reveal emerging themes (Tesch 1990). An analysis of the observation in the classroom will also be done, using the observation schedule. I will also compare the learners' scores from the assessment tests that they do at the end of each year, for as long as they are in the support programme to establish whether any progress is made or not.

Document analysis of the assessment tests done at the end of 2005 were compared with those done at the end of 2006. This method is an unobtrusive source of information that can be accessed at a time convenient to me. Two frequency tables show the results. A frequency table for English and one for Mathematics because the emphasis of the support programme focuses on those two areas. The table lists the participants by number and reveals their score in years and months for 2005 and 2006 and progress (if any). The results of these assessments contribute towards the findings of this research and also reveal the effect the support facilitated.

### **1.5.2.4 Ethical clearance**

Permission to interview the teacher and the learners will be first obtained from the Department of Education and then the school principal. Permission will also be obtained from the support teacher. Permission to interview learners will also be obtained from their parents. Verbal consent will also be obtained at the beginning of each interview. Total confidentiality would be maintained. The support teacher and the learners would remain anonymous and no names would be mentioned. Ethical clearance (Appendix G) will also be obtained from UKZN.

## **1.6 FURTHER COURSE OF STUDY**

In chapter two the theoretical framework for educational support within inclusive education will be described.

In chapter three the research design and the methodology will be explained. This includes the formulation of the research questions, the stating of the aims, the sample, the data collection procedure and the analysis.

In chapter four the results and interpretations of the data will be discussed.

Chapter five will present the conclusions and implications of the research, limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for further research.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has set out to explore how a remedial teacher negotiated her role to that of a support teacher and to explore the extent to which a greater number of learners are supported with the use of computers. From the findings, implications will be highlighted. A theoretical perspective and framework on education support within an inclusive education policy will be outlined in chapter two.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND FRAMEWORK ON EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT WITHIN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world*

*Nelson Mandela*

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1960s the United Nations has promoted greater awareness of the educational needs and rights of learners with disabilities. The most positive result of the United Nations covenants and charters on the protection of human rights (including the right to education) lies in their influence on law and practice in the international community. Learners are now considered to have the right to education on the basis of equal opportunities. In many instances this has been interpreted to mean the inclusion of all learners, regardless of disability, in regular classrooms. Attainment of an educational right, therefore, focuses on the need to ensure that all learners, regardless of disability, are able to access equitable educational opportunities that will allow them to achieve their potential (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999: 29-30).

According to Booth and Ainscow (1998: 3) the idea of inclusive education was given impetus by two conferences set up under the auspices of the United Nations. The first of these, held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, promoted the idea of 'education for all'. At this conference, the goals for 'Education for All' were set and it was proclaimed that every child, youth and adult should be able to benefit from educational opportunities which would meet their basic learning needs. Ever since that conference, UNESCO, along with other UN agencies, and a number of international and national non-governmental organizations, have been working towards these goals. As such, the inclusion of pupils experiencing barriers to learning and development in ordinary schools and classrooms is part of a global human rights movement (UNESCO, 2006: 3). This was followed in 1994, by a UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain. The idea of inclusive education was given further

impetus, which led to The Salamanca Statement being used in many countries to review their educational policies. The purpose of the Salamanca Conference was to further the objective of education as a fundamental human right by paying attention to the fundamental policy shifts necessary for the development of inclusive education. These needed to be aimed at enabling schools to serve all learners, including those experiencing barriers to learning (Landsberg, 2005: 8). The conference considered the future international direction of Special Needs to ensure the rights of children to receive a basic education as is explained below (UNESCO, 2006: 3).

According to Dyson and Forlin (1999: 31), the Salamanca Statement is useful as it serves as a referral document in guiding inclusive developments internationally. The guiding principle that informs this framework is that schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from remote or nomadic populations, learners from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (UNESCO, 1994: 59). Furthermore Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (1999: 9) reiterate that the Salamanca Statement is unequivocal in asserting that inclusion is a right, a right which appears to be universal, seeing the creation of inclusive schools as part of the creation of an inclusive society.

The Salamanca Statement further proclaims that every child has a fundamental right to education, must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning, that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and that education systems should be designed and programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs. This statement expresses high hopes for the beneficial impact of inclusive schools, by declaring that such schools can provide the most effective means of educating the majority of learners and are a way of combating discriminatory attitudes. In addition, the statement suggests that inclusive schools will ultimately improve the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (Dyson & Forlin, 1999: 35). The importance of including children with disabilities was strongly reaffirmed at this conference (UNESCO, 1994). This conference in Spain has certainly been very influential in encouraging governments to

adopt inclusive policies and in reforming schools to respond to a much greater diversity of need in their local communities (Mittler, 2006: 2).

Whilst inclusive education is a relatively recent advance in our thinking about schooling and pedagogy, it is a rapidly establishing movement within both local and global contexts (Graham & Slee, 2005: 2). In South Africa, in particular, the adoption not only of inclusive education policies but also of very broad notions of “barriers to learning” and “education for all” can be seen as a crucial part of the overall social, political and economic transformation which the country is experiencing (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 1999: 30).

They further maintain that a child’s right to education, therefore, relies currently on the need to provide equal educational opportunities for all learners so that they may achieve to their full potential. As such, as schools in South Africa move towards providing quality education through inclusive education, structures for support and collaboration are critical within the school environment. Structures of support mentioned in Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001) include institutional-level support teams and district based support teams. Furthermore, the joint report of the National Committee on Education Support Services on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (DoE, 1997: 5), recommends that education and training should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society. The NCSNET/NCESS (DoE, 1997: 6) report also makes a number of recommendations regarding the different aspects of the curriculum. A central feature of all of these recommendations is that there needs to be flexibility regarding the teaching and learning process. This means that all aspects of the curriculum need to be developed to ensure that the diverse needs of the learner population are addressed in such a way that they are met within the school. As far as possible education structures, systems and learning methodologies should be able to meet the needs of all learners (DoE, 2001: 17)

Schools in South Africa are encouraged to engage in the process of change and become a part of the transformation in education. By making appropriate changes schools will then be able to accommodate the full range of learning needs as best as possible. In an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services need to be created in line with what learners with learning difficulties require. UNESCO (1994) maintains that schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes and moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children, and improve the efficiency and, ultimately, the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system. Furthermore Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (1999: 33) highlight, that inclusion can be seen as a cost-effective form of provision of education in a highly resource-intensive venture. Therefore the establishment of school support and more effective service delivery of special help to learners has become a necessity. A move towards inclusive education and meeting the needs of all will lie in the establishment of a school-based support team, as is done at the primary school used this research.

However, support services have to move away from only supporting individual learners to supporting the system, so that the system can respond to the needs of all learners. According to White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), it is clear that some learners may require more intensive and specialized forms of support to be able to develop their full potential. In White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) intervention in an ordinary school is referred to as low intensity support, provided within the school. This is where the once remedial teacher, now support teacher can play an important role. In addition to the skills of the support teacher, technology can be used to enhance the support of a greater number of learners. The use of computers is becoming more an everyday reality because many schools are supported by large companies which donate computers. By using computers more children could be supported in their learning.

With the above in mind, this research aims to explore the changing role of the remedial teacher to a support teacher and how a greater number of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning can be supported. This research is located in the field of Educational Psychology, where the focus is on learning and development. In this research, the focus is on how the system responds to the child experiencing difficulties.

Furthermore, changes in our educational policy draw our attention to the principles underpinning the inclusive education policy. The principles of inclusive education fall in the category of learning and development, whereby support for learning is emphasized.

In this chapter, the researcher presents a literature review based on discussion documents, research reports, conference proceedings as well as other sources that pertain to the discussion.

## **2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **2.2.1 Education in the past**

In order to understand the concept of inclusive education within the South African context, one needs to reflect on the history of Special Education. Prior to 1994, the South African Education Department was split into 18 racially divided education departments. The different educational support services were also managed by racially segregated education departments. Each education department had its own policies regarding learners with special educational needs. Not all education departments made sufficient provision for these learners and service provision was characterized by glaring inequalities and inconsistencies, a lack of co-ordination, and a lack of national focus and clarity on the nature of support services (DoE, 1997). There were extreme disparities and discrepancies in the provision of specialized education for the different race groups with virtually no provision for black disabled children (UNESCO, 2006: 1).

According to Naicker (2000a: 1) apartheid education in South Africa promoted race, class, gender and ethnic divisions and emphasized separateness, rather than common citizenship and nationhood. The fiscal allocation in terms of race, where white education enjoyed more funding, resulted in wide-scale disparities with regard to all aspects of education. This included quality of teacher training, resources at schools, location of schools, support materials and almost every aspect of educational service delivery. Beside the issues raised above, apartheid education produced a dual system of

education which included a mainstream and special education component. Historically the areas of special needs education and education support services provision have reflected the general inequalities of South African society, with disadvantaged learners receiving inadequate or no provision.

Children who need special resources, adaptations to the curriculum or different assessment strategies to aid them with their learning were referred to as 'learners with special education needs'. Traditionally, mainstream teachers have worked in relative isolation within their own classrooms with these learners and as such have been primarily responsible for them being the instructional leader and manager in the classroom. When learners experienced difficulties, the teacher referred the learner to a professional for assessment and possible placement in a separate educational setting (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2004: 3). These children were tested by the school psychologist, and depending upon their Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score, they received instruction either in a special or adaptation class at a mainstream school or at a special school. This led to the labelling, categorizing and stigmatizing of young children, which had an adverse effect on their self-esteem and self worth (UNESCO, 2006: 2). This in itself is highly controversial as noted by Siegel (1999), who believes that it is indeed a paradox that IQ scores are required of individuals with learning difficulties because most of these learners have deficiencies in one or more components that are part of these IQ tests anyway; therefore inadvertently their scores in IQ tests will certainly be an underestimate of their competence.

As mentioned above, support services were administered in racially and ethnically divided departments, resulting in striking disparities in resource allocations to the different departments. In general, the more privileged the educational department, the more support the children had. Access to services was unevenly distributed, with white education being most privileged. Furthermore in the past, the few support services that existed were not proportionally distributed among all South African learners. The quality of those services, and where and when they existed, often perpetuated inequalities instead of supporting those with the greatest needs. According to Donald *et al.* (1997: 25) there has been a lack of administrative and professional integration between the components of education support services. Decision-making with regard to

special needs and services were biased, undemocratic, non-participatory, and ineffective for the majority of needs. Services were not related to the general curriculum and were seen as separate from the developmental needs of all learners.

Fragmentation occurred between the support services and mainstream education. The previous 'pull-out' system, which took children out of the system to deal with the problems, promoted the stigmatization of those services, especially when the general school population had limited understanding of them. Some departments operated on the 'pull-out' system whereby learners received supplementary assistance from itinerant staff, while other departments placed learners in special classes or schools. These services were quite extensive for the more privileged sectors. Lazarus and Donald (1995: 46) on the other hand state that a particular problem of education support services, where they existed, was that they operated predominantly in terms of cure rather than prevention. Services therefore were geared towards finding remedies for learners that presented with particular problems rather than focus on their optimal development. This a-contextual and individualistic approach ignored systemic factors.

In addition to unequal distribution of services, embedded was the belief that the learner with the deficit was the problem, rather than the curriculum and teaching and learning environment (DoE, 2001:5). Furthermore, remediation previously tended to be individualistic, based on a medical model, and the services offered were rather fragmented and inadequate (Williams, 2000: 3). Within the deficit model or paradigm, management involved the "fixing" of what educators identify as specific deficits or problems (Ainscow, 1998: 11) or "filling in the gap" in terms of lacking skills. The medical model emphasized the learners' short-comings. The focus within this paradigm is on what is wrong, what is missing, what the individual can't do, how and why he fails. The deficit focus perpetuates the myth that the pathology lies within the child, foregrounding the failure of the child to cope in the system rather than examining the failure of the system to cope with the needs of the child (Booth & Ainscow, 1998: 83). The demise of the medical model, utilized for so long in the field of education utilizes the patient-diagnosis-treatment sequence and paradigm, and using as its point of departure the philosophy that a learner is equal to a patient who is in need of a correct

diagnosis and the concomitant treatment to again function optimally (Naicker, 1999b: 37; 46).

### **2.2.2 Education in the post apartheid era**

Even though South Africa faces many challenges in its development as a democratic society, reconstructing education from what it was, to a system that brings equity to the education of all children, is one of the country's most urgent challenges (Donald *et al.*, 1997: 18). Nonetheless, the turning point for all South Africans occurred in 1994 as a result of a democratic election, and significant educational reforms have taken place characterized by a spirit of democracy. (UNESCO, 2006: 3). Over the past six years, reform in education in a democratic South Africa has stimulated a commitment to the development of a single, inclusive system of education which has the capacity to provide for appropriate ways and means to facilitate learning and meet the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2004: 1).

The main changes have involved bringing eighteen widely differing education departments under one ministry with one policy; redressing the differences in resources and access to education controlled by these departments, and making coherent sense of national education needs in areas such as curricula, qualification structures, support services, and teacher education (Donald, *et al.*, 1997: 19). At the beginning of 1997, the NCSNET and NCESS were appointed to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in South Africa. Further to that the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System outlines how the system should transform itself to accommodate the full range of learning needs and establish a caring and humane society (UNESCO, 2006: 3). In general the NCSNET/NCESS report suggests that all learners can learn within a single inclusive system. Further, it follows that learners should not be taken out of the class and placed in a special education system. Support should be provided for learners who need extra support and they should not be kept back in their grade. The central issue is that all learning is recognized no matter how small the step. Within the South African context a shift towards an inclusive outcomes-based education model

where all learners experience success will certainly entail moving away from a dual system to a single system of education (Naicker, 2000b: 3-4).

In the development towards an inclusive approach as discussed in the White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001: 7), it is clearly stated that the establishment of an inclusive education system will require appropriate district as well as school-based support services. The White Paper 6 proposes that support should move away from supporting individual learners and develop a much broader support focus. It is suggested that a systemic approach to the assessment of individuals and the development of preventative and intervention programmes are necessary in order to respond appropriately to the needs of all learners (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2004: 2). Support programmes need to respond effectively to the demands of an inclusive educational system and in particular to the needs of the teachers who will be directly involved in the day to day implementation of these programmes. To do this effectively educational support must move away from an outdated focus on exclusion, individualism and isolation to an emphasis on ecosystemic values, such as promoting sustainability, alliance, co-operation and mutual support. (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2004: 3).

## **2.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

### **2.3.1 What is Inclusive Education?**

In a wider sense, inclusion is about developing inclusive communities and education systems. It is about including everyone, regardless of ability, gender, language or disability, so that all learners can belong in school and have access to the educational outcomes that schools offer (Landsberg, 2005: 4). The term “inclusion” has become a more accepted way of describing the extent to which a pupil with special educational needs is truly “integrated”. According to Farrell (2000: 2), the term refers to the extent to which a school or a community welcomes all people as fully included members of the group and values them for the contribution which they make. For inclusion to be effective all pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school and community - that is they should be fully included. Sebba and

Ainscow's (1996) article provides the following definition of inclusion; namely that it is the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organisation and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils.

Inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning, and with the participation of all learners who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. According to UNESCO (1994: 2), it is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children. Education has to be of a quality that retains children's interest and facilitates their success in the learning enterprise. Such an education can only be provided on the basis of appropriate policies and plans for the delivery of such a service, including resource allocation. Inclusive education is concerned with providing quality education with special emphasis on learners who experience barriers to learning and participation. This includes children who have disabilities and learning difficulties (UNESCO, 1994: 5).

Inclusion involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 1994: 6). It is aimed at meeting the diverse needs of learners within the mainstream education provision, using all available resources efficiently and effectively (UNESCO, 1994: 6). This inclusive process is seen as a method of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners and reducing exclusion within and from education in order to afford all pupils their basic human right to education, equal opportunities, and to social participation (UNESCO, 1994: 6).

This type of education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated in regular schools, inclusive education is an approach that transforms the whole system, to respond to the diversity of learners in the system (UNESCO, 1994: 7). Naicker (2000a: 2-3) maintains that within the South African context a shift towards an inclusive OBE model where all

learners experience success will entail moving away from a dual system (special and ordinary) to a single system of education. The dual system of the past had its own theory, assumptions, models, practices and tools. This system with a 'special education separate sector', according to Barton and Oliver (1992: 67), had its definitions, policies and practices shaped largely by the medical and psychological perspectives. Barton and Oliver (1992: 69) argue that this was a discriminatory system since "to be categorized out of 'normal' education represents the ultimate in non-achievement in terms of ordinary educational goals". On the other hand, a single inclusive system of education based on the rights model, has its own theory, assumptions, models, practices and tools. Oliver (1996) argue that the rights model moves away from a pathological assumption, an individual deficit theory and institutional discrimination. Given the shift from apartheid and special education to an inclusive OBE system, different theories and practices must necessarily emerge.

According to Sebba & Ainscow (1996: 8-9) there is a worldwide paradigm shift from special education to inclusive education. They maintain that inclusive education involves the changing of attitudes and the maximizing of the participation of all learners in the learning process. It also involves changes in the curriculum and teaching methods, which therefore ensures benefit to all learners, not only to those with disability. The Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) advocates early identification of children with "barriers to learning", such as those with learning disability, in order to offer appropriate support. The understanding is that identification of the child's strengths or barrier to learning would result in the planning of appropriate management strategies to allow for the experience of success rather than failure. The focus needs to shift to how they learn and to recognize the difference rather than the deficit. Sebba & Ainscow (1996: 8) have supported the view that learners with special educational needs possess differences, not deficits. Therefore it is important for educators to see this "learning difference" rather than "disability" and to recognize and value this as adversity. Inclusion seems to promise that it will enhance not only the attainments of learners with disabilities, but also, by drawing the attention of schools to individual differences, the attainment of all learners. In other words in Skrtic's (1991) phrase, "equity" is the way to excellence" (Dyson & Forlin, 1999: 35). Foreman (2001) cited in Broadbent and Burgess (2006: 2) identifies a number of factors that have influenced the

development of a more inclusive model of education: the fact that separate special schools did not produce improved academic or social outcomes over integrated settings, especially for those with mild disabilities.

Naylor (2005: 7) provides four systemic factors considered to be crucial to the success of inclusive approaches: manageable class size, adapted curriculum to meet diverse needs, pre-service teacher training and in-service and availability of specialists to support classroom teachers. Porter (2001: 32) maintains that if implemented properly, inclusive education services can be less expensive to implement, have a broader reach in terms of positive educational and social impacts on children, contribute significantly to the ongoing professional development and job satisfaction of educators and produce better morale and team effort in the school environment. Furthermore Carrington and Elkins (2002: 51) concur that inclusive education signifies much more than the presence of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. They maintain that inclusive education has developed from a long history of educational innovation and represents school improvements on many levels for all learners. Inclusive education is about celebrating differences in dignified ways. Above all Carrington and Elkins (2002) maintain that it is about a philosophy of acceptance where all people are valued and treated with respect.

### **2.3.2 International perspectives and policy regarding inclusive education**

Although the inclusive education movement is now an international phenomenon, it has its origins in the relatively rich developed countries that had already applied both extensive and sophisticated regular and special education systems (Dyson & Forlin, 1999: 25). They also highlight that in recent years, there have been two significant developments internationally in the education of learners: first, the integration movement of the 1960s and later, the transformation of this into the 'inclusion' movement. Inclusion is taken to indicate a continued commitment to create mainstream schools which are inherently capable of educating all learners (Sebba & Ainscow, 1996; Vlachou, 1997). Countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand have embarked on relatively successful ventures of inclusive policies as will be

discussed below. The United Kingdom situation will be described more fully, whilst only briefly alluding to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

### **2.3.2.1 Inclusive policy in the United Kingdom**

In recent years there has been an increasing commitment to the development of inclusion in English education policy. As such there is a strong policy framework based on inclusive principles and values (Dyson, Gallannaugh and Millward, 2006: 3). Although all mainstream and special schools and colleges of further education have developed their inclusion policies, there is a great deal of variation among the local education authorities who administer special needs legislation and provide specialist services. There are also great variations between schools themselves in terms of funding and services provided (Mittler, n.d.: 4). The first indication of this came in the 1997 Green Paper in which the government clearly aligned its policy with the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), calling on countries to adopt inclusion as a principled position. Since then, there has been a series of programmes of action, funded projects and guidance documents. Most recently, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act delivered a strengthened right for all children to be educated in regular schools and the government has issued statutory guidance to schools and local education authorities (LEAs) setting out for them how they should actively seek to remove the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude pupils with special educational needs (Dyson, *et al.*, 2006).

Farrell (2000: 1) states that in the United Kingdom the Government's discussion paper "Excellence for all Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs and the subsequent "Programme of Action" refer to the right of all pupils to be educated in a mainstream school wherever possible. This view was earlier endorsed by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which has had a major impact on shaping policy development in many different countries. Furthermore in the United Kingdom, alongside policies on inclusion, schools are under more pressure than ever to raise academic standards for all their pupils. In this climate, some teachers are expressing reluctance to admit more pupils with special needs as they fear that their presence in the school can result in deterioration in the overall attainments of the rest of the pupils. In an attempt to address

this dilemma and facilitate the inclusion of more pupils with special needs, schools and local authorities in the UK have begun to appoint increasing numbers of learning support assistants to work alongside teachers in the classroom (Farrell, 2000:1). Similar developments have also taken place in the USA, Canada and Australia. The United Kingdom government is also in strong support of collaboration between special and mainstream schools. In fact, collaborative links between special and mainstream schools can be regarded as a distinctive feature of United Kingdom practice over the past 20 years. This is where some learners from a special school will visit a neighbouring primary school, accompanied by a teaching assistant (Mittler, 2006: 6) to become accustomed to one another.

According to Mittler (2006:8) the most fundamental pre-requisite for inclusion is reform and restructuring of ordinary schools and of the education system itself. The restructuring of ordinary schools involves changes at a variety of levels. In the United Kingdom these include

- Reform of the curriculum with a view to widening access and participation of all pupils.
- Recruiting large numbers of teaching assistants for literacy and numeracy, as well as special educational needs.
- Provision of detailed guidelines on school-based identification and assessment of pupils at an early stage, with a view to supporting as many learners as possible within the school and reducing inappropriate segregation and exclusion.
- Mobilising a range of support services for schools and pupils.
- Ensuring that inclusion issues permeate staff development at every level.

Most pupils with 'statements' (it is a document indicating a learner's status) of special educational needs are now in mainstream schools. These learners are guaranteed additional resources after a full multi-professional assessment. Many of these children would undoubtedly have been sent to special schools in the past. Their needs are now met in mainstream schools with the help of additional funding provided (Mittler, 2006: 5). It is known that teachers are responsible for the overall success of the teaching programme; they plan the work, monitor the pupils' progress, plan review meetings and liaise with the parents, whilst the learning support assistants (LSAs) are responsible for

implementing the programme under the teacher's guidance. This style of support seemed similar in most schools in the UK (Farrel, 2000: 2). According to Farrell (2000: 6), many LSAs are employed to work in schools to support learners with special needs. There has been evidence showing that many learners with learning difficulties have been successful in completing their education in mainstream school because of the quality of support that was available. According to Farrell (2000: 8) a wide variety of practices are observed in relation to withdrawing pupils from class for individual sessions. For example, some pupils with specific literacy difficulties are withdrawn for extra work while others are supported in class. In general a very flexible approach is adopted. This more flexible way of working is an essential step towards developing more inclusive practices. Assessment and decision making procedures are firmly based on the initial assumption that all children will be educated in ordinary schools. The aim of assessment is to identify obstacles and difficulties for each child individually and then try to agree on a programme of action to address these (Mittler, 2006: 4). According to Mittler (2006: 5) the government in the United Kingdom is committed to retaining special schools as part of a broad spectrum of provision and in order to enable parents to choose a special school placement for their child if that is their considered option.

### **2.3.2.2 Inclusive policy in Canada**

In Canada education is a provincial/territorial responsibility and each of the ten provinces and three territories has control of the directions and structures of their educational system (Valeo, 2003: 18). The practice of inclusive education in Canada varies considerably from region to region, with some regions actively supporting, and indeed mandating the approach, and others doing little to encourage the practice.

It is interesting to note though that according to Valeo (2003: 18), over the last thirty years Canada has enacted legislation mandating school boards to assume responsibility for all learners regardless of ability and to provide special education programmes and services without cost to parents. According to Rustemier (2002: 12) provision is made for the placement of all learners in the mainstream class. The consideration is that every learner should succeed there, until or unless such a placement proves detrimental to the

needs of the child or other children. Processes for school boards to follow in order to ensure that learners are correctly identified and appropriately allocated to special services and programmes have been put in place. Furthermore, parents are, for the first time, allowed a role in the identification and placement of their children through an appeals process.

According to Campher (2000: 4), school-based learner services teams are the key means by which teachers are provided with support in Canadian schools. Formal and structured co-ordination of weekly meetings attending to the essential tasks needed to support teachers and learners are provided by these teams. Special education teachers co-ordinate and facilitate problem solving school based-support team meetings. In other words, they manage the special educational needs of learners in the school. These teachers receive training from the district support team on a monthly basis, regarding diagnostic assessment, learning style interventions, behaviour management, literacy development, change theory and multiple intelligence and so on. Preparing teachers for mainstream class teaching has undergone a major pedagogical shift in recent years. Training institutions are required to ensure that pre-service teachers are competent to cater for the needs of an increasing range of diverse learners (Sharma, *et al.*, 2006: 80-81).

### **2.3.2.3 Inclusive policy in Australia**

In Australia, education remains the authority of State Governments. This means each state has a separate educational system and differences in pedagogy, governance and structure can be found between each (Graham & Slee, 2005: 25).

Mainstream classes in Australia contain learners with a range of diverse needs, thus it is essential that teachers are prepared to accept the role of being an inclusive teacher and have positive beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion. There are a variety of strategies such as building inclusive schools and building inclusive classrooms enacted to support a stronger move towards inclusion. Educational authorities and in particular mainstream class teachers are required to support all learners including those with difficulties and to

ensure that they are able to access the curriculum (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman & Earle 2006: 82-83).

Although Australia does not have specific legislation that mandates educational integration, its national education policies do exhort social justice and equity for all learners (Aniftos, 2006: 3). She maintains that Australia has a broad range of policies to guide school practices against discrimination and towards social justice. In the Australian state of Queensland for example, implementation of practices to promote the inclusion of learners with difficulties is understood as the achievement of an inclusive education system (Graham & Slee, 2005: 3).

Aniftos' (2006: 2) views regarding inclusive education are that the inclusive education curriculum in Australia is still an emergent topic in need of much research and discourse.

#### **2.3.2.4 Inclusive policy in New Zealand**

According to Kearney and Kaine (2006: 201), New Zealand, like many countries, is beginning the journey towards a more inclusive education system. Ryan (2006: 1-2) maintains that although education is an integral part of New Zealand society, there remains a separate special education system, yet currently with strong moves towards inclusion. In that regard the New Zealand government has recognized the importance of special education, developing the Special Education 2000 policy in order to develop a world-class inclusive system of education. The Special Education 2000 policy has two major components with the aim of helping schools to meet learners' needs. These are information, education and specialist advisory support to assist families, schools and teachers achieve the best possible learning environment for all learners with special education needs, as well as a significant increase in funding and a modified system of resourcing to provide the necessary learning support for all learners with intensive needs and to provide extra resources for schools to meet the needs of other learners who require additional learning support (Ryan, 2006: 5).

Kearney and Kaine (2006: 201) maintain that New Zealand has the chance to make inclusion a reality, but point out this will require a different way of thinking based on a different knowledge base than that of traditional special education paradigms.

### **2.3.3 South African perspectives and policies regarding inclusive education**

According to Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht (1999: 47) the concept of inclusion in South Africa operates, like elsewhere in the world, within the framework of a rights approach which emphasizes that all learners have a right to access education and focuses particularly on those learners who have been excluded from the mainstream schooling system of the education as a whole. To understand why so many countries, including South Africa, are moving from segregated to more inclusive education systems that accommodate all learners, it is necessary to analyse the processes and goals of education as well as how educational systems reflect different views about differences among learners (Landsberg, 2005: 4). As Du Toit (1996: 7) maintains, it is a new way of thinking about specialized education that has led to the policy of inclusion. She believes that it is a belief in the inherent right of all persons to participate meaningfully in society. This implies acceptance of differences and making room for persons who would otherwise be excluded. Rather than requiring that the learner with difficulties adapt to the classroom- as was the goal of mainstreaming- the classroom environment should be reorganized to fit the learning needs of all learners.

For countries with comprehensive and sophisticated special education systems, the issue of inclusion is one of the relocation of learners, resources and expertise into an equally comprehensive and sophisticated mainstream education system. For countries without such a system, the issue of inclusion is essentially one of extension and development, such that the limited educational provision already available can begin to include a wider range of learners. For a country such as South Africa, with its unique history, both sets of issues are likely to be relevant (Dyson & Forlin, 1999: 26). Schools in South Africa are currently faced with enormous challenges with regard to their development. Becoming inclusive is one part of the broader challenge of building a culture of learning and teaching where quality education becomes a reality (Lazarus, *et al.*, 1999: 67).

### **2.3.3.1 National policy regarding inclusive education in South Africa**

Developments in thinking and practice in inclusion indicate that the issue is now at the heart of policy and planning in education in South Africa. According to Farrell (2000), no longer is the concept solely restricted to discussions about where to educate learners with special needs. Even international and national patterns and trends regarding disability have undergone major shifts which have influenced the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa to a large extent. These shifts centred mainly around the move from a medical discourse to a rights discourse (Naicker, 1999b: 12-14). Inclusion for South Africa refers to the way in which schools can reduce barriers to participation and learning for all learners who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded. This poses challenges for schools who are required to develop high standards of excellence while still embracing an inclusive agenda (Farrell, 2000). The following two South African definitions of inclusive education are the perspectives of the reference committees and consultative bodies who were commissioned to investigate the future of special education:

- Inclusive education is defined as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997).
- In the Education White Paper 6 on special needs education: Building an inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001), inclusive education is about:
  - a. Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.
  - b. Accepting and respecting that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience.
  - c. Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
  - d. Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status.

- e. Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners.
- f. Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning.
- g. Empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.
- h. Acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures.

At a national level, major changes were taking place as a result of the new democracy in South Africa (Naicker, 1999b: 15). According to Rustemier (2002: 13), the 1997 report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) has moved away from the concept of 'special needs' to an approach which seeks quality education for all. The report sees the central challenge facing education as recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of the entire learner population in order to promote effective learning for all.

According to Lazarus, *et al.*, (1999: 51) the NCSNET/NCESS report makes a number of recommendations regarding aspects of the curriculum. A central feature of all these recommendations is that there needs to be flexibility regarding the teaching and learning process. This means that all aspects of the curriculum need to be developed to ensure that the diverse needs of the learner population are addressed. The NCSNET/NCESS report promotes a two-prong, three tier approach to support schools. The two-prong approach includes a focus on interventions to address the diverse needs of the learner population and barriers to learning as well as additional support that is required by some learners either throughout or at some point in their learning journey (Lazarus, *et al.*, 1999: 52).

It is quite clear that inclusive education in South Africa is a constitutional imperative and that it is the responsibility of all South Africans not only to take seriously the rights discourse, but also to create the necessary conditions for education for all.

### **2.3.3.2 Education support services**

One of the first shifts that South Africa's education support services should make is realizing that inclusive education is not only a special education paradigm – it is a totally new education system, including mainstream and special education (Shebba & Ainscow, 1996: 11). In this sense education support services does not work for special education any more, but has to focus on the entire education system, supporting all learners and educators. According to Hay (2003: 136), the days when it was reasoned that only certain learners require support, are past. An education support service, within inclusive education, has to plan to help all learners and staff. There will always be the possibility that some learners will require more focused attention.

According to Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (2004: 1), the establishment of an inclusive education system in South Africa will require the development of appropriate support services at both school and district level. Recent policy documents in South Africa propose that such a support system should take a systemic approach utilizing district support teams that focus on management and personnel support rather than providing direct face to face interventions for individual learners. Due to the fact that so many learners need support, a possible obstacle may be the limited number of professionals and inequitable deployment of human resources. Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (2004: 1) maintains that this obstacle can be reduced with the introduction of the support teacher and the school support team. Schools are in a position to provide services in a natural setting, thereby minimizing the likelihood of separating children with difficulties from their peers. Therefore it is imperative that educational support services become an integral part of the education system. If this does not happen, the support will remain fragmented and isolated. Lazarus and Donald (1995: 50) have the view that highly skilled personnel such as remedial teachers can provide specialized assessments, diagnosis and curative intervention according to the medical model.

Campher (2000: 1) maintains that support services have to move away from only supporting individual learners to supporting educators and the system, so that they can recognize and respond to the needs of all learners. There must be structures for the provision of support for the paradigm shift from a fragmented deficit model of

adjustment towards a holistic systems model of change. It is clear, according to Donald *et al.* (1997: 25) that the development of effective and appropriate education support services will be vital in helping this process of curriculum adjustment.

Lazarus and Donald (1995: 50) maintain that general teacher education must become a focus for education support services. According to Pringle (2000: 80) the formation of a teacher support team at the school could go a long way in giving teachers the support and knowledge they need. The support team could help educators develop new skills within their classrooms as well as develop resources to be used in the classroom. Training for teachers should be sustained and ongoing. Workshops on curriculum change where skills are taught could be of great benefit to all educators. Regular staff development should be offered. Teachers need to be equipped to recognize problems and to provide a basic screening and referral service and to understand ways in which they can integrate support services in their own classroom practices and contribute to the holistic development of their learners. Therefore regular classroom teachers need to be supported in their development of new and effective practices for their classrooms and their schools. Hence support for teachers in their increasingly demanding role within a whole school approach is vital, as teaching classes of learners with diverse needs is not an easy task. Through this support structure staff members can constantly be developing in the areas of skills acquisition, values enrichment, strategic competencies and relationship capacities (Campher, 2000: 6). As emphasized, education support services are central in providing quality education for all (Lazarus & Donald, 1995: 51).

#### **2.3.3.2.1 District Support Team**

According to Lazarus, *et al.*, (1999: 54-55) the primary focus of the district support team, is that of providing support to schools and other learning sites. This team should consist of a core of education support personnel with the competencies to fulfil their role in the district, as well as a network of support resources in the areas concerned.

In strengthening education support services district-based support teams should comprise of staff from district and regional offices as well as from existing special

schools. According to Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (2004: 2) the primary function of these district support teams will be to access programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. Through supporting teaching, learning and management they would build the capacity of schools to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs. According to Campher (2000: 7), in the provision of support to schools, multi-professional district support teams are involved with on-the-job training of teachers in developing aspects of school to bring about a culture of learning and teaching.

#### **2.3.3.2.2 School-Based Support Teams**

Similarly, a school-based support team should consist of the principal and a small group of teachers and other key people from the school and outside, who would meet on a regular basis. The purpose would be to discuss special needs and problems referred by teachers in the school and to come up with ideas for individual intervention. Essential to the effectiveness of school-based support teams there must be regular and adequate consultative support from education support personnel from the district support team (Donald, *et al.*, 1997: 26). Establishing contact with the educational support systems and actively requesting support and help is critical and is also a way of ensuring that such services actually develop to meet the needs of both teachers and learners (Donald, *et al.*, 1997: 29).

According to Campher (2000: 6) teachers are human resources who can be empowering. Establishing an appropriate team with experience and expertise, within a particular school enables the team to address needs specific to a particular school. The school-based support team can be a vehicle through which transition can be supported, the facilitation of the improvement of a school's atmosphere and the competencies of the staff. Whole school curriculum development and reform and the generating of intervention strategies can take place through this structure. Effective mainstream intervention and support is a process of helping children with difficulties in learning within the mainstream curriculum or classroom. There will always be a need for intervention. Although prevention can reduce the extent and severity of contextual disadvantage, social problems, and special need in education, it is unlikely ever to

eliminate them (Donald, et al, 1997: 29). It is therefore necessary that every effort must be made to accommodate and provide for learners that experience barriers to learning.

The key to what will be the support that mainstream teachers will receive from their school-based support team to provide for their learners that are experiencing barriers to learning. This implies that the mainstream teacher must be trained to help learners that experience barriers to learning. According to Porter (2001: 22) a second adult in the classroom can be a significant help for the teacher. In general, schools have institutionalized the model of one teacher for each class, but there is nothing sacrosanct about this approach. If an additional adult is needed, the means to make one available needs to be identified. This approach adds considerably to the flexibility that the school needs to adapt to meet the needs of various learners. Carrington and Elkins (2002: 51) maintain that it is evident that the culture of a school affects the manner in which it operates and the way in which the problem of translating inclusive policy into inclusive practice is solved.

With regards to structures for the provision of support, every effort must be made to accommodate and provide for all learners in the mainstream classroom. Furthermore the mainstream curriculum must be developed in such a way so as to provide for the needs of all their learners. The aim is to give all learners equal educational opportunities within an inclusive system. Hence different levels of support must be provided within the school (Western Cape Education Department, 2000: 8). Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001: 15) states that in an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services need to be created in line with what learners experiencing difficulties require. This means that learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools and those requiring moderate support will receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools. Such special schools need to be resources for the community of teachers (DoE, 2001: 16).

In keeping with what White Paper 6 envisions the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) highlighted the following suggestions in this regard:

- Support level one: in the mainstream class in the first place, every effort must be made to accommodate and provide for all learners in the mainstream classroom. This implies that the regular mainstream teacher will need to be trained to teach and help learners that experience barriers to learning. The key to the success of this approach will be the support that these teachers will receive (WCED, 2000: 8).
- Support level two: periodic withdrawal from the mainstream class. The learning support teacher can withdraw learners experiencing barriers to learning from the mainstream class, either individually or in groups, and assist them as necessary (WCED, 2000: 9). The support teacher can also support the class teacher in working with the learners in class.
- Support level three: should the support above not meet the needs of some learners, an ELSEN class can be established at a school. These classes will not only provide for intellectually or scholastically impaired learners, as is currently to an extent the case, but also for all other learners who need specialized support. However, as soon as these learners in these classes are ready for mainstream classes again, they must return there (WCED, 2000: 9).
- Support level four: ELSEN schools should be for learners who cannot progress in any of the above-mentioned options. They could therefore still be placed in separate schools for learners with special educational needs. The objective in these highly specialized schools must, however, always be to return the learner to the mainstream as soon as it is desirable. These schools should also be used as resource centres to assist teachers in mainstream schools (WCED, 2000: 9).

#### **2.3.3.2.3 THE REMEDIAL TEACHER**

For one to understand what a remedial teacher is it is imperative to understand the term remedial education. Al Shureify (2006: 3) explains that remedial education is any course which is designed to assess learners' performance level, identifies factors that interfere with learning, and adapts the materials in accordance to the needs. Hence a remedial teacher is a trained specialist equipped to assess a learner's level of

functioning in a school context, diagnose the problems, and once these difficulties are identified, help the learner. When the materials and methodologies are adapted to the learner's needs, the learner can work to overcome the learning disability and try to perform to the best of his potential. This of course is underpinned by a medical model approach which is quite different from how a support teacher functions. This will be discussed next.

#### **2.3.3.2.4 THE ROLE OF THE SUPPORT TEACHER**

Carrington and Elkins (2002: 52) describe the role of the learning support teacher as an "organizational inquirer", with whom various questions can be raised and addressed. Opportunities then exist for teachers to question existing practice, review performance, encourage experimentation and work across boundaries.

According to Ainscow (1995: 16), the support teacher can be seen in the following three roles, namely:

- Maintenance role: where they respond to those pupils within existing arrangements, and perhaps, in so doing, unintentionally assist in the retention of the status quo.
- Modifying role: where they respond to those pupils who struggle within existing arrangements by seeking to adapt existing arrangements.
- Development role: where they respond to those pupils who struggle within existing arrangements by working with colleagues to make new arrangements that may facilitate the learning of all pupils.

The support teacher should have excellent skills to work with learners, either individually or in a group (Hay, 2003: 137). Furthermore, such a member should have outstanding skills to work with and influence adults involved in learners' lives. The support teacher should have a very good educational background, as she will have to recommend workable strategies to the teacher to support the learner in the classroom.

According to Farrell (2000: 8), many pupils with special educational needs have particular problems in learning that require them to receive one-to-one attention for certain periods of the day. It is therefore vitally important for programmes of work to

combine individualised instruction, either in class or on a withdrawal basis. Since this balance is not easy to achieve, the support teacher can help with it.

#### **2.3.3.2.5 ADOPTING AN OUTCOMES-BASED APPROACH**

The curriculum and education system as a whole has generally failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in massive numbers of dropouts, pushouts and failures. While some attention has been given to the schooling phase with regards to “special needs and support” in the past, the other levels or bands of education, such as higher education, have been seriously neglected (Naicker, 2000a: 2). Hence these issues formed the background for the adoption of outcomes based education (OBE) as a new curriculum approach. OBE was adopted with the intention of addressing the disparities and difficulties associated with apartheid education, and to facilitate the transformation of the education system in general. The OBE model is also a useful vehicle for implementing inclusive education.

OBE is based on the following three premises:

- All learners can learn and succeed, but not on the same day or in the same way.
- Successful learning promotes even more successful learning.
- Schools control the conditions that directly affect successful school learning.

One of the most important features of OBE is that it is concerned with “establishing the conditions and opportunities within the system that enable and encourage all learners to achieve those essential outcomes” (Spady: 1994: 2). According to Christie (2000: 8), the OBE curriculum is an important step away from the content laden, often ideologically distorted, examinations oriented apartheid curricula. OBE emphasises ‘learning by doing’, problem-solving, skills development and continuous assessment. The OBE curriculum gave rise to a major challenge, that of transforming the dual system of education (special and ordinary education) to a single, inclusive OBE system.

In OBE, all learners achieve, but not at the same pace. Each successful learning experience is a stepping stone to more success. Schools are pivotal in creating the conditions for success at schools. The OBE system does not consider grades, passing or failing as important in achieving outcomes (Naicker, 1999b: 21). Instead it requires learners to ultimately become reflective thinkers, independent, creative, resourceful and critical (Naicker, 2000b: 6). In OBE educators and learners engage in a partnership in the learning experience and mutual respect is required.

Hence it becomes evident that the OBE curriculum is compatible with inclusive education because it is more flexible than the traditional curriculum and allows for variations in outcomes, learning rates, styles and pace of learners.

#### **2.3.3.2.6 DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM**

According to Campher (2000: 1) the classroom environment should be flexible enough to change and adapt to environmental demands. According to Sebba & Ainscow (1996: 15), considerable emphasis is placed on learning through experience in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to consider life in the classroom through the eyes of the learner, and to create responsive classrooms. Firstly it is important to plan for the class as a whole, with an emphasis on making all activities inclusive. Secondly, it is helpful to encourage teachers to recognize and use more effectively those natural resources that can help support learners' learning. The third key factor in creating more inclusive classrooms is the ability to modify plans and activities whilst they are occurring in response to the reactions of individuals within the class.

Campher (2000: 3) maintains that in dealing with classroom problems effectively one has to take the dynamics of the systemic context into consideration as basis for problem solving, development and a holistic service to the school as a system. Flavell (2002: 7) maintains that in an inclusive classroom learning programmes should be adjusted and adapted to enable learners of differing needs and abilities to work together. This new concept requires mainstream educators to accept responsibility for a diverse range of learners and a classroom perspective that embraces this diversity as a means of

providing positive opportunities for learning through the development of new teaching and learning approaches (Jenkins, 1997: 141).

Hay (2003: 136) believes that the biggest shift is probably to keep all learners in the inclusive class as against removing him/her from the setting. This implies that the school support team should therefore focus on assisting the learner and the teacher in the inclusive classroom. This is a huge shift and will imply substantial creativity, such as utilizing technology. For this approach to be successful the support team must be knowledgeable, educationally trained staff who preferably has classroom experience.

### **2.3.3.3 USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE INTERVENTION**

In the past few decades, a burgeoning technology industry struggled for a place in the traditional education system. Yet over the past few years, in an effort to increase financial efficiency and learning effectiveness, the use of technology and computer-aided instruction in remedial education emerged (Keup, 1999: 1). According to Balajathy, Reuber and Damon (1999: 1) the computer can have positive motivational influences on learners with difficulties. Research conducted by McCormick (1994) postulated that self motivation is instrumental for achievement and the computer can possibly provide such novel motivation. Another positive aspect about choosing computer based interventions has to do with the amount of time-on-task necessary for positive learning effects. Independent computer instruction allows for more time-on-task than traditional methods and also offers corrective feedback. In her research she found that learners using language-based computer programmes show great improvement in word recognition and decoding skills. Recent improvements in computer software have also resulted in highly intelligible and natural-sounding voice feedback.

Many potential benefits of computer-aided instruction according to Keup (2006: 1), have been suggested, such as privacy, objectivity, timeliness of feedback, individuation of learning, flexibility, convenience, and a non-threatening learning environment for learners. These features of computer aided instruction appear to offer an arena for the integration of educational goals with technological advancements in remedial education

(Keup, 2006: 1) and supporting learners. Computerized technology, used by learners, are “self-paced”, “self-directed” and “self-sufficient”. All the results of the work done by the learners are automatically recorded on the computer and is easily accessible so that the teacher can provide timely feedback on the learners’ progress. Even when on-task, the learner can ask for assistance from the teacher. By quickly analyzing the results of the learner, the teacher is made aware of difficulties experienced. Computer programmes also have an editing option so teachers can modify the software tasks and objectives to meet the individual needs and abilities of the learners.

Haughland (2000: 1-2) stresses that computers have an impact on learners - especially when the computer provides concrete experiences. In addition, Anderson (1999), highlights that computers motivate learning and improve the attitudes of learners. The remedial teacher or support teacher can intervene when learners appear frustrated or when there does not seem to be progress. Frequently, just a quick word or two, even from across the room can remind the learner what they need to do next. By observing what the learner is doing, the teacher can help to expand the learner’s learning. In addition, working on computers and using appropriate software and achieving success, can enhance learners’ self- concept.

Keup (2006: 5) maintains that the demand for learning support continues to increase, and it does appear that technology can provide one answer to this growing challenge of including all learners. Reviewing all that is being said about the use of computers in enhancing support, it becomes obvious that computers are cost efficient and can be used in schools to meet the needs of all learners

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter brings to a close an overview of inclusive education practices and provision of support internationally and nationally with emphasis on South Africa’s policy of inclusion. In the next chapter, the research design and methodology are discussed.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

*The purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows*

*Sydney J. Harris*

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This research focuses on how a remedial teacher negotiated her role to that of a support teacher and how the use of computers enhanced her intervention and support programme at school enabling her to work with a greater number of learners. Current educational policies emphasize an inclusive educational policy. This school as is appears is very much in line with national policies. The support teacher works with all learners requiring support and not just those with a specific learning difficulty.

This chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology, making specific references to the aim, statement of the problem, research design and methodology, data collection and analysis.

#### **3.2 AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aim of this investigation is to explore the changing role of the remedial teacher to a support teacher, which is in keeping with current educational policy documents of South Africa. This investigation will also explore how a greater number of learners experiencing barriers to learning can be supported within a school with the use of suitable educational computer programmes. Hence against the above background, the following primary and secondary aims were identified.

### **3.2.1 Primary aim**

This research aimed at exploring the experiences of the remedial teacher changing her role to that of a support teacher, within the South African inclusive education policy framework.

### **3.2.2 Secondary aims**

The secondary aims are the following, namely:

- How the remedial teacher negotiated her role to a support teacher.
- How institutionalized school support benefits teachers as well as learners experiencing learning difficulties.
- How computer technology could extend the support rendered.

## **3.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

### **3.3.1 General orientation**

The aim to create a single education system for all learners should not over-shadow our constitutional obligation to provide quality education for all (Du Preez, 2007: 14). A great number of learners are experiencing barriers to learning; therefore there is a need to provide support on a wider scale. The support provided needs to be done within the school, and needs to be effective but at the same time cost saving. This involves changes in the approaches of teaching with a common vision that covers all learners of the appropriate age range with a conviction that it is the responsibility of the school to educate all learners.

### **3.3.2 Primary research question**

*What are the experiences of a remedial teacher changing her role to that of a support teacher, within the South African inclusive education policy framework?*

### **3.3.3 Secondary research questions**

- *How did the remedial teacher negotiate and change her role from a remedial teacher to a support teacher?*
- *How does her support benefit teachers as well as those learners who are experiencing learning difficulties?*
- *How can computer technology extend the possible support rendered?*

## **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.4.1 Qualitative research**

For this research, the researcher used a qualitative approach. Such an approach is a naturalistic one that explains human and social issues. Furthermore this approach interprets a phenomenon in terms of meaning created by people (Krefting, 1990: 214). Qualitative research covers a spectrum of techniques, the centrepiece of which is observation, interviewing and documentary analysis (Punch, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 84) which will be described in detail further on. In qualitative research, the researcher is directly involved in the setting, interacts with the people, and is the “instrument”. As such, no qualitative report can exclude the researcher’s own perspective (De Vos, 1998: 259).

According to Fouché and Delport (1998: 79), a qualitative paradigm lends itself to an interpretative approach and aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. The qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions.

It also produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words. Krefling (1990: 214) reiterates that critical to qualitative research is the subjective meanings and perceptions of the participants.

### **3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.5.1 Introduction**

The support teacher was interviewed for the purpose of data collection in order to answer the research question. From the interview, information about the school as well as the pupil population was established. Some learners who are currently in the support and intervention programme were also interviewed. The experiences of the support teacher were explored through an unstructured one-to-one interview. The response of the learner participants were accumulated in a focus group interview. These interviews were recorded for authentic verbal accounts to describe and understand their meaning in their life world (Kvale, 1996: 175).

#### **3.5.2 Literature review**

The literature review focuses on educational support provided to all learners at school, particularly in relation to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Through a single inclusive education system, the education transformation in South Africa ensures that all learners have a right to and equal access to learning (DoE, 2001: 11). In the South African education system, inclusion of learners in a single unified learning and training system explores and describes a paradigm shift from a medical model to a social rights discourse where all learners have equal opportunities ( Naicker, 1999a: 12). With the diversity of learners at schools, it is necessary to be able to accommodate all learners within an inclusive educational setting. It is therefore important to have suitable structures and policies in place to be able to cater for all learners. Of utmost importance is adaptation of school structures such as flexibility in the curriculum and for teachers to be able to work with all learners in the classroom. The establishment of a school based support team further helps to provide suitable

guidance, advice, shared learning and support to both teachers and learners when necessary.

### **3.5.3 Procedure**

The researcher initially sought permission to do research from the Department of Education (Appendix F). Thereafter verbal permission was sought from the school principal and informed consent (Appendix H) was acquired from the teacher. It was also necessary for the researcher to request permission from the parents or guardians of the participants (Appendix I). Verbal consent was also obtained at the beginning of the focus group interview. The support teacher and learners were willing and keen to participate. The researcher briefed the participants about the purpose of the study and the structure of the interview.

### **3.5.4 Sampling**

According to Sarantakos (2000: 154-56), sampling is utilised in research. Sampling in qualitative research is described as relatively limited, low cost and not being time-consuming. In qualitative research, sampling occurs subsequent to establishing the circumstances of the study clearly and directly. The sample for this research was the only support teacher and some learners currently in the support programme at one particular primary school in Pinetown. Both boys and girls were included. Learners currently in grade four, who were willing to participate in this study were interviewed. This school was purposively selected because of its specific support rendered to learners, and therefore the teacher was also purposively chosen. Sunnyside Primary School (not the real name of the school) has a learner population of about 740 learners from grade one to grade seven. This is a co-educational institution with approximately thirty teaching staff at the school. Learners from different racial backgrounds are at this school. For most learners English is their second language.

#### **Teacher participant**

Mrs. More (not her real name) has been a remedial teacher for over 15 years. As a remedial teacher she engaged in remedial teaching in the conventional way, where

individual learners were withdrawn from their classroom in the course of the day. Even though they were sent out by their class teacher for these remedial lessons there was very little contact between the class teacher and the remedial teacher. The remedial teacher worked in relative isolation away from the classroom. However, as the pupil population dynamics at the school changed, greater numbers of learners needed additional support. This was due to the diverse learner population at the school.

#### Learner participants

For the purpose of this study, the sample population from Sunnyside Primary School in Pinetown (Appendix A) comprised of grade four learners experiencing barriers to learning. For most learners English is their second language. Of the nineteen learners supported in grade four, ten volunteered to be part of the focus group interview. Table 3.1 reflects those who were willing to participate in the focus group interview.

**TABLE 3.1: DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS: GRADE 4 LEARNERS**

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade	Mother Tongue	No. of years in the intervention programme
Khwezi	10y 3m	M	4	Z	2
Nkosi	13y 1m	M	4	Z	3
Wandile	12y 5m	M	4	Z	1
Phiwo	11y 11m	M	4	Z	3
Vuyile	11y 4m	M	4	Z	1
Zama	11y 11m	F	4	Z	1
Pretty	11y 6m	F	4	Z	2
Brad	11y 2m	M	4	E	1
Lungelo	10y 2m	M	4	Z	1
Duran	12y 4m	M	4	E	3

- Pseudonyms have been used for all participants.

### **3.5.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

#### **3.5.5.1 Unstructured interview**

Interviewing is regarded as the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research (Greeff, 1998: 292). Interviewing can also be described as a social action between the interviewer and interviewee to obtain research information (Schurink, 1998: 298). In this research an unstructured one-to-one interview, also sometimes referred to as the in-depth interview was utilized. It is known that such an interview extends and formalizes conversation (Greeff, 1998: 297). The researcher chose an unstructured interview for the teacher participant as this allowed her to freely express her thoughts, feelings and experiences. Greeff (1998: 298) maintains that at the root of unstructured interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Furthermore this method is focused and discursive and allows the researcher and participant to explore an issue which in this instance was the changing role of a remedial teacher to a support teacher.

In the interview with the support teacher a single open-ended question was asked, namely, “What are your experiences as a support teacher?” According to Fouche (1998: 160), an open-ended question allows for a variety of responses. In addition, Greeff (1998: 293) believes that an open-ended question does not predetermine answers and allows the participant to respond in his/her own terms. When there was uncertainty, a probing question was asked, for example, “What do you mean?” According to Greeff (1998: 295) the purpose of probing is to deepen the response. It is a technique to persuade the participant to give more information about an issue under discussion.

This interview was tape recorded since it constitutes essential data and also so that the information could be accessed at a later time. Collins (1998: 8) mentions when events are recounted and experiences are described, it is made more substantial and more real through being recorded. This study through the interview process aimed to capture Mrs. More’s experiences in her changing role from a remedial teacher to a support teacher through unfolding meaning of her experiences (De Vos, 1998: 292). In addition to the taped interview, the researcher also had verbal discussions with the support teacher as

well as telephonic conversations to clarify issues when necessary. The discussions usually lasted approximately one hour, and the telephone conversations lasted about ten minutes.

### **3.5.5.2 Focus group interviews**

Kruger (quoted in Kingry, Tiedje & Friedman 1990: 124), defines the focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Morgan (1997: 6) on the other hand describes focus groups as a research technique where data is collected through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. According to De Vos (1998: 305) focus groups are group interviews and a means of better understanding how people feel or think about an issue. The group is “focused” in that it involves some kind of collective activity.

Participants were selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group. The learner participants were put at ease by establishing rapport with them before the interview and by explaining to them how the interview would be conducted and by assuring them that all responses are important and valuable. A single open-ended question was posed to the focus group, namely, “How do you feel going to Mrs. More for extra lessons?” Morgan and Krueger (1998: 1) maintain what the participants in the group say during the discussions constitute the essential data in focus groups. Hence one can assume that the purpose of focus groups is to promote self-disclosure among participants. For Krueger and Casey (2000: 7), it is to know what people really think and feel.

Focus groups usually include six to ten participants. Ten participants were chosen to be in this focus group. Groups this size allow everyone to participate while still eliciting a range of responses. Morgan and Krueger (1998: 71) mention that deciding on the right number of participants means striking a balance between having enough people to generate a discussion, and not having too many to feel overcrowded.

To ensure that the interview process was effective the researcher followed the basic principles of interviewing as outlined by Bogdan and Bilken (1992: 174):

- Established rapport with participants through small talk before starting the interview;
- Informed participants of the purpose of the interview;
- Assured participants that their responses will be reported without their real identities being revealed;
- Used appropriate facial expression;
- Asked for clarification when a response was not clear; and
- Listened carefully.

### **3.5.5.3 Participant observation**

The researcher also used participant observation in order to acquire first hand information and to enrich the understanding of phenomena of interest (De Vos, 1998: 80). Participant observation can be regarded as a research procedure that is typical of the qualitative paradigm (Strydom, 1998: 278). De Vos (1998: 278) describes participant observation as a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday setup in a particular community or situation. Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 673) maintain that participant observation is fundamental to all research methods.

According to Carrington and Elkins (2002: 53) observation of the teacher in the computer room presents a means of manageable analytical observation of the support processes provided and interactions, as well as allowing for some validation of information that was collected through the interview. For this study the researcher took the role of privileged observer, where the observer did not assume the role of participant, but had access to the lessons in the computer room. The aim was for the researcher to be less threatening to the learners in the computer room. According to De Vos (1998: 33) observation is applied as widely as possible in order to collect the richest possible data.

In this research participants were observed working on the computers on specifically chosen educational programmes. To avoid being intrusive, the researcher sat behind the

learners and made cursory notes, which were then expanded into fuller accounts (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 109-112). With these cursory notes the researcher maintained a diary from which the researcher formulated an observation schedule.

The observation schedule comprised of the following questions:

- a. How many children were supported in each session?
- b. What did the content taught comprise of?
- c. What support strategies were used?
- d. What software was used for the intervention process?
- e. How was each session organized?

#### **3.5.5.4 Data analysis**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (De Vos, 1998: 339). Both interviews, that with the support teacher and that with the focus group of learners were tape recorded and then carefully transcribed. Marshall and Rossman (1995: 110-111) suggest that the process of preserving the data and meaning on tape and the combined transcription and preliminary analysis greatly increases the efficiency of data analysis.

The data from the interviews were analysed through systematic sorting. Transcripts were read closely to gain insight and objective perceptions of the participants' experiences (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 293). Notes were made alongside the margins for easier categorizing. Topics were identified and listed. The researcher used open coding to identify possible themes. Open coding is the process of breaking down and examining data, contextualizing and categorizing data (De Vos, 1998: 345). Similar topics were clustered and labeled as themes. Categories were then identified for the themes. The researcher used Tesch's approach to analyze the data (Poggenpoel, 1998:

343, 344). The interview with the support teacher, as well as the focus group interview, were analysed using Tesch's method of open coding to reveal emerging themes (Tesch, 1990).

Document analysis of the assessment tests done at the end of 2005 were compared with those done at the end of 2006. This method was chosen because it is an unobtrusive source of information that can be accessed at a time convenient to me. Two tables were drawn up to document the results, one for English (Appendix B) and one for Mathematics (Appendix C), because the emphasis of the support programme is on these two areas. The table lists the participants by name (not their real names) and reveals their score in years and months for 2005 and 2006 as well as the progress (if any). The results of these assessments contribute towards the findings of this research and also reveal the effect the support facilitated.

#### **3.5.5.5 Trustworthiness**

Poggenpoel (1998: 348-351) proposes Guba's model in ensuring trustworthiness by applying the following criteria:

- Truth value implies that the findings of this study are truthful. According to Poggenpoel (1998: 348), in order to determine whether the information gathered from the participants was truthful, the researcher must establish a correlation between their verbal accounts and the analysis of the study. Data from the support teacher and the learners was gathered to form a chain of evidence. Multiple methods of data collection were used, that is interviews, observation and document analysis. Furthermore direct quotes were utilized as a chain of evidence when presenting the findings.
- Applicability of findings is when there is transferability to another context or setting. According to Poggenpoel (1998: 349) the focus is on describing the phenomena studied and by providing a thick description of the methodology, so that other researchers can do the same.

- Consistency refers to how repeatable the study might be with the same participants or in a similar context (Cresswell, 1994: 221). According to Poggenpoel (1998: 350), the findings would not be altered if the participants expressed the same opinions at another time in another research study. This is a unique context, as this school has put into place a system of support long before education policy dictated it.
- Neutrality refers to the freedom of bias in the research procedure and results (Poggenpoel, 1998: 350). To ensure neutrality the researcher posed a single question to the support teacher and a single question to the focus-group. The taped interviews were coded and recorded to elicit appropriate themes. An independent coder was used. There was agreement between the researcher and the independent coder regarding the themes that emerged.

### **3.5.5.6 Ethical issues**

The fact that human beings are the objects of study brings unique ethical problems to the fore. Therefore De Vos (1998: 63) sees ethics as a set of moral principals that are suggested by an individual or group, and offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents. Ethical clearance was gained from the university (Appendix G). The participants in the focus group interview were young so they were assured that no harm will come to them in any way and that at any point of the interview, they could withdraw their participation.

#### **3.5.5.6.1 Informed consent**

Informed consent is a necessary condition according to Hakim (2000: 143). Emphasis must be placed on accurate and complete information so that participants will fully comprehend the investigation. The researcher acquired informed consent from all participants. Informed consent means that participants were adequately informed of their participation to enable them to understand fully the investigation and its

consequences. This allows them to feel comfortable about their participation (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1993: 479). Hakim (2000: 143) also feels that in informed consent emphasis must be placed on accurate and complete information so that participants will fully comprehend the investigation.

#### **3.5.5.6.2 Confidentiality**

According to Dane (1990: 51) confidentiality implies that only the researcher should be aware of the identity of participants.

#### **3.5.5.6.3 Anonymity**

Anonymity implies that no information provided by the participants would in any way reveal their identities (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 366). Anonymity also means that no one, including the researcher should be able to identify any participants afterwards (Babbie, 1990: 342). To ensure anonymity further, neither the name of the school, nor that of the support teacher or any of the learners used in the research, were mentioned. The researcher also ensured that the tape recordings and all data collected were not accessible to anyone during the research nor after the research is complete.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provides an explanation of the aims, the statement of the problem, the research design and methodology, as well as how the data was analysed. The next chapter reveals the results of the research and embarks on a discussion thereof.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*A teacher awakens a child's own expectations*

*Patricia Neal*

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the major themes and categories (listed below in Table 4.2.1) of how the remedial teacher negotiated her role to that of a support teacher are presented. Verbal accounts from the interview with the support teacher as well as with learners who are in the support programme are analysed and used in the findings. The spoken words of the participants transcribed from the tape recorded interview are presented in italics. Comments made during the sessions of observation are also included occasionally to contribute towards the findings. Documents viewed and analysed during the research process will be discussed below, showing the effect the support had on the learners' achievement.

#### 4.2 FINDINGS

As schools move toward providing quality education through Inclusive Education, structures for support and collaboration are critical within the school environment (Campher, 2000: 1). This means that throughout the intervention process willingness to engage with the individual needs of learners, colleagues, including the school support team, and seeking solutions is invaluable (Donald, *et al.*, 1997: 305). It is also important that the environment in the school should be flexible enough to change and adapt to meet the needs of all learners. Campher (2000: 2) describes such an organization as a "learning organization" - an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. In addition to the above Donald, *et al.*, (1997: 305) believe that if you are creative in the way you think about support in your classroom, and in your school, you can turn differences and difficulties into constructive

experiences. It appears from the findings that the teacher participant engaged creatively with the situation presented to her.

All interviews were conducted at the school. An unstructured interview was carried out with the support teacher to establish how she negotiated her changing role from a remedial teacher to a support teacher. Then a focus group interview was conducted with some learners who were in the support programme, to establish how they felt being in such a programme.

**TABLE 4.2.1: From remedial teacher to support teacher**

MAIN THEMES	RELATED CATEGORIES
THEME 1 Experiences as a remedial Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one and one-to-a-little-group</li> <li>• Difficulties in accommodating learners</li> </ul>
THEME 2 A more constructive role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating the space</li> <li>• Supporting learners</li> <li>• Supporting teachers</li> <li>• How learners view the support</li> </ul>
THEME 3 Experiences of her changing role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indirect service delivery in supporting teachers</li> <li>• School Guidance Team</li> <li>• Shared responsibility</li> </ul>
THEME 4 Incorporating computer-aided learning to support learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extending the reach</li> <li>• Learners' sense of having fun</li> <li>• A visible improvement</li> </ul>
THEME 5 Reflections on her changed role as a support teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A supportive management team</li> <li>• Contributing to learning and development</li> <li>• Professional fulfillment as support teacher</li> </ul>

## **4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Experiences as a remedial teacher**

#### **One-to-one and one-to-a-little-group**

Mrs. More began teaching in 1992 and was employed as the remedial teacher at the school (Refer to chapter 2 for a definition of the term ‘remedial teacher’). As the remedial teacher she worked with the children individually or in small groups of two’s and three’s. She describes her first two years at the school in the following manner: *I did remedial work in the old fashioned way, where you dealt with one child or two or three. As a remedial teacher you were not really expected to deal with children who had barriers to learning because of language, it had to be a specific learning disability.* No doubt there is great benefit in this way of intervention as highlighted by Donald *et al.* (2002/1997: 305) that spending a little individual time with learners on how to do things more effectively may make a very substantial difference in their performance. This intervention however, has limited reach, as the next category reveals.

#### **Difficulties in accommodating learners**

Mrs. More was appointed before 1994. At that time, the remedial teacher extracted one or two learners at a time and worked with them outside of the classroom as she mentioned above. This however was not cost effective and she could not reach out to all learners. The remedial intervention occurred outside the classroom in isolation from the class teacher and often the class teacher did not really know what intervention was taking place. Often the remedial teacher was not a full-time teacher and was employed on a part-time basis, making it difficult to communicate and work constructively with the class teacher. Furthermore this type of remedial intervention existed only in schools that could afford such a teacher. Mrs. More states *that as the remedial teacher I wasn’t expected to help children who were slow learners... the thought at the time was that slow learners should cope with the pace that their ability allowed them to cope.*

The above situation required a rethinking or reconceptualising how this particular school was addressing the barriers learners were experiencing. It seems as if Mrs. More became pro-active and as a leader was instrumental in setting up suitable structures in the school and maintained the support for learners and teachers.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: A more constructive role**

##### **Creating the space**

Swart and Pettipher (2005:3) point out that over the last few years in South Africa, many schools have taken up the challenge of confronting and managing the demands of diversity as the school community's needs evolved and changed and a single education system was put in place. Individual principals and teachers, in many instances acted as change agents and embarked upon the inclusion journey before the policy and a support framework was put into place. In the case study Mrs. More maintains that her changing role *grew out of a need that ... the school had, that presented itself at the school*. At this particular school a greater number of learners required intervention and support in learning therefore it was necessary to create the space for support, possibly linked to the demographics of the changing school.

As Mrs. More states, *at first I used to work with the children individually, or in small groups. The little groups became bigger and bigger. At this school, they already had a lot of learners from other cultures and languages. So they...at this school they were a little bit ahead of the times, if I can put it like that*. According to Swart and Pettipher (2005: 3), this school was taking up the challenge of confronting and managing the demands of the diverse school population. It became noticeable that the needs of the learners were becoming prominent and a greater number of learners needed support. As Mrs. More states, *it happened over a period of time, and it happened almost by itself* that her role evolved from being a remedial teacher to a support teacher.

According to Al Shureify (2006: 1) however, there are concepts that can be taken from remedial education to assist a wider range of learners at school, within the framework of inclusive education. He maintains that when the materials and methodologies are

adapted to meet the needs of the learners, these learners could overcome their learning difficulties and try to perform to the best of their potential. As Mrs. More states: *when you work over a period of time with slow learners experiencing learning difficulties, you see progress. This is rewarding to you the support teacher.*

### **Supporting learners**

According to Crawford and Porter (2004: 14) it is understood that any learner, regardless of whether he or she has a disability, may need individualized attention and support from their teacher to address difficulties with the curriculum. It is therefore vital that appropriate support is provided for the learner within the system. This is what Mrs. More aimed to provide, as she has a timetable on which different classes of different grades are allocated a time slot. In the allocated period learners from a particular class, e.g. grade 4 come for support. According to Mrs. More *most of the lessons are half hours, are taken up by a specific class, so the learners from that class, who need any kind of support will come during that time. And in that time, while they are they with me, I do either group work or individual work.* Crawford and Porter (2004: 14) maintain where such support is needed outside the regular classroom it should be for as brief a period of time as possible with an active plan to reinstate the learner back into the regular classroom as soon as possible with appropriate supports for the teacher and learner.

As a support teacher Mrs. More is also able to help those learners that were previously regarded as special class learners. As she says *its not that I am helping them increase their pace or anything, that's not the idea, but I'm lending support to those children that would normally go to the special class in the sense that ... mm it takes them a lot longer to get to know the basic phonics and spelling skills for instance. Now I will support them in the sense that I still help them to ... learn and consolidate those phonics and spelling, for instance... so in that regard I render support.* Mrs. More feels that by helping these slow learners she helps them *to develop a self concept, and by developing their own level they develop a sense of achievement.* According to Donald *et al* (1997: 346) appropriate teaching for those with specific learning disabilities is not necessarily complicated. This is no more than good, individualized teaching.

Hay (2003: 137) reinforces the notion that the support teacher should have excellent skills to work with learners on an individual basis as well as a group basis. *We sometimes have a child who comes in from another school, where there is just a short period of time, where they almost need like a bridging over, they might have had a different emphasis in teaching of ...and because I concentrate mainly on language and maths, those are the two areas that I help them to catch up.* UNESCO (1994: 32), states that teachers and schools need to adapt their ways of working to meet the children's needs. This will result in an improved and more cost-effective education system as well as benefiting all children.

Mrs. More also provides support to those learners who are on a waiting list to be admitted into other schools such as special schools and training centres. She says that *in the meantime I try and support them here.* Mrs. More also works with those learners whose progress the teacher is concerned about *and when I assess the children, the child doesn't seem to have specific serious areas of learning disability or backlogs or whatever,...they may come to me for a short while until we figured out, this is an emotional thing or it just was a little bit of a hiccup and the child is over that.* According to Broadbent and Burgess (2006: 2) effective inclusion of learners with diverse learning requirements into regular classrooms still requires careful organization and the creation of a learning environment that is accepting, caring and safe.

In the case study, in order to help those learners who were experiencing barriers the school created a bridging class *to do bridging work with the second language learners.* The school then realized over time that *the bridging class wasn't really the answer...and at our Guidance Team Meetings it became clear that these children were in desperate need of support and help but they were now basically left to their own devices and the class teacher needing to help them and... it seemed that it was becoming quite desperate. So I decided to also try and help them in small groups together with my other children... that I was taking already for English.* The fact that there was no identifiable special education centre where learners were pulled out to be kept in a separate classroom tried to circumvent the issue of stigma. Carrington and Elkins (2002: 57) suggested that as long as special needs departments exist in schools,

they will generate the perception of a group of children as special and as somebody else's responsibility.

### **Supporting teachers**

According to Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (2004: 3) mainstream teachers have traditionally worked in relative isolation within their own classrooms and have been primarily responsible for being the instructional leader and manager in the classroom. When learners have experienced difficulties, the teacher referred the learner to a professional for assessment and possible placement in a separate educational setting. With the support teacher being available the situation is different but still beneficial to the learner as is illustrated below.

She has specific time on her timetable allocated to each class and this helps her keep track of what each child is doing and says, *in that way I provide support for the teacher.* Mrs. More also selects work suitable for learners for example suitable comprehension and spelling exercises and gives them to the class teacher to use in the classroom. *So in that way we work together.* The class teacher marks the work but when the set of work is complete it goes back to Mrs. More. After Mrs. More looks at the work she provides a diagnostic breakdown to the class teacher. She would say *look, these are her/ his specific areas of weakness.* She maintains that it is often useful to work with learners individually since you do not always get the chance to, as the class teacher. It helps because she can go back to the teacher and say *see, she/he can do this but this cannot be done so don't expect her/him to do this, don't be angry or impatient. I would say that this is also support, don't you. Because... now the teacher has more knowledge of the child, which I was able to acquire on a one-to-one basis.* In a collaborative approach to support, mainstream teachers need to be recognized as full partners with professionals, parents and others and will consequently have increased responsibility for coordinating the activities of learners with disabilities. Furthermore such teamwork with teachers requires an ability to bridge the gap between classroom teachers and the support teacher, who has additional understanding of children's emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties and to demonstrate that the skills shared will in fact be of use and benefit in the classroom (Hanko, 1990: 98).

By simply sending the children to the regular classroom with no support is not appropriate action. Regular classroom teachers require help with the knowledge and skills needed to make inclusive education a success. All teachers certainly need collaborative assistance from a support teacher, who will be able to assist with instructional strategies to use in the inclusive classroom. The expectations of what the teachers should do must therefore be matched with support in a variety of ways. Hence to become inclusive schools, schools would need to accept the responsibility to see that teachers have the necessary support to make it work within existing staffing arrangements (Campher, 2000: 2). According to Mrs. More *once the teacher has the support and realizes that there certainly is no pressure, the learner is helped but is left to cope at his/her own pace.* Of importance, according to Broadbent and Burgess (2006: 3) is the effective management of classroom and school learning environments and utilization of specific teaching and learning strategies that facilitates all learners' active engagement and participation in the learning process.

### **How learners view the support**

In response to the following question, "how do the children feel about being in this additional support programme?". Mrs. More responded that the learners reacted differently depending on their grade. The response about the junior primary learners was that *they feel very positive, they are absolutely no problem and that is probably the case until the end of grade 4.*

When the researcher interviewed a few learners, some of them expressed how they enjoyed going to the extra lessons, for example *I feel happy, I feel happy because I learn more education and I feel clever and learn so that's how I feel confident.* Another participant concurred *I feel quite happy coming to Mrs. More, because she helps us with our readers.* Yet another participant said *I feel happy because I learn more in spelling and maths and I like it because I learn how to use the computer, read stories and listen to the teacher when she's talking or reading a story and, and she teaches us education.* Another participant said *I like going to Mrs. More, she helps us with our lessons in maths and she helps us with our reading.*

As much as most of the participants have expressed that they do enjoy going to Mrs. More, the learners do agree that it is not always good to leave the class. Some of the negative comments were, *sometimes we don't like to come to remedial because sometimes people laugh at you that you're stupid and sometimes they tease you.* Another participant said *I hate it when I come to remedial and sometimes when I am doing some work; I have to leave it and come out.* Another participant expressed himself in the following manner; *I hate it when I come to remedial because, because sometimes inside the class you are doing cool stuff, and really fun things and then when you come late, you miss out.* There is no doubt that learners will definitely feel they are missing out on the learning happening in class. Mrs. More says that *learners are taken out at a time, when something new is not taught, or if written work is not done maybe during the art lesson.* Mrs. More did concur with the above and had the following to say about learners as they got older, for example from grade 5, *the children start becoming more aware of different kinds of things and other children start teasing them. So then they become aware that they are coming to this different class to the other children and they question me as to why they need to attend these lessons then I take out their progress reports and show them why they need to attend. They are then satisfied with my explanation and don't mind coming to me.*

After addressing the growing need to support learners, her role had changed significantly, and this will be discussed in the next theme.

#### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Experiences of her changing role**

According to Crawford and Porter (2004: 16), inclusive educational practice places challenging demands on the classroom teacher. Hay (2003: 137) maintains that all teachers need to be empowered to support all learners, of course with more focus on those with more intense needs. Therefore the delivery of support to teachers, as expressed by Porter (2001: 30) is a key element. As Hanko (1990: 3) stresses, teachers need both professional and emotional support in school, as teachers often feel ill-equipped to respond to the range of difficulties learners experience.

## **Indirect service delivery – supporting teachers**

According to Porter (2001: 21), one of the most promising approaches in supporting the classroom teachers with inclusion is to provide support from a collaborating teacher. *I also help, I think I help by helping their teachers to adjust and amend the learners' tasks and the work they are given in class, so that also suits them (the learners), that they're not expected to do things that is totally beyond them. So that they feel they are actually learning; that they are being successful at something in class.* Instead of providing only direct service to learners, the support teacher places emphasis on providing professional assistance in planning and teaching strategies for the classroom teacher. This assistance may be focused on meeting the unique learning needs of the learners or on developing classroom strategies and activities for day-to-day use. Campher (2000: 1) also emphasizes that support services have to move away from only supporting individual learners to supporting educators and the system, so that they can recognize and respond to the needs of all learners. Campher (2000: 2) further reiterates that teaching classes of learners with diverse needs is not an easy task, therefore teachers need to be supported in their development of new and effective practices for their classrooms and their schools; hence support for teachers in their increasingly demanding role within a whole school approach is vital.

## **School Guidance Team**

At the school there is a Guidance Team comprising of every single teacher, the support teacher as the coordinator and a member from management. The Guidance Team meets once a semester. This team operates per grade. The task of the Guidance Team is to help train the teacher to identify any learner needing any kind of support, be it academic, social or emotional. This makes the teacher feel in control and in charge and responsible for the learner. In the first term each grade has a meeting where all issues pertaining to learners are discussed - be it academic progress, behaviour, home situation, poverty or any other relevant issue. Prior to the meeting the class teacher accumulates the necessary information about each learner requiring support. This information is used as the point of discussion at the meeting. The necessary intervention takes place under the guidance of the support teacher. In the second term

the Guidance Team forwards the file to the class teacher who adds comments. This school was certainly innovative in creating structures to support all learners well before the implementation of White Paper 6.

The support teacher can help the teacher with all the other complications associated with providing high quality instruction to special needs learners in a mainstream class. The support teacher can also facilitate more structured sharing among teachers who work in the same school (Porter, 2001: 21-22). According to Porter (2001), one means of achieving this involves “teachers helping teachers” through problem solving teams that focus on practical and site specific strategies. Mrs. More is very aware of the fact that the class teacher has much to do in the classroom and says, *because you got so much to do in your classroom as the teacher, to try and keep track of these... is also difficult*. Therefore Mrs. More arranges to meet with teachers as and when the need arises. She would either send a note down to the teacher when that teacher’s class is with her, or she speaks to them during the breaks or she sees them in the morning before school, or at the end of the school day in the afternoon. Ainscow (1998: 17) supports the idea that it is through shared experiences that colleagues can help one another to articulate what they currently do and define what they might like to do.

Porter (2001: 22) feels that a collaborative working relationship among teachers, support teachers and specialists, teachers and parents and among the learners themselves, must be established. According to Porter and Stone (cited in Campher, 2000: 4) collaboration of the support teacher with regular class teachers, providing advice, assistance and encouragement is necessary. Mrs. More supports teachers in various ways, such as *I collected all the work for the specified learners, the readers and the phonic books and I made a file for them*. Mrs. More accumulates appropriate work for the learners requiring support and says *I don’t just dump all of this on top of the teacher*, but locate suitable material for the teacher to support the learner in the classroom. Such a staff member, according to Hay (2003: 137) has a very good educational background and plenty of experience, like Mrs. More who is able to provide appropriate support, guidance and advice whenever needed.

## Shared responsibility

According to Hanks (1990: 131), teachers in ordinary schools are faced with the task of dealing with a greater number of learners who need, at some time during their school career, more understanding than many teachers are able to offer. Since teachers are in the unique professional position of daily contact with learners, they have the opportunity to provide learning experiences which would enable them to cope better. Hence the task of the support teacher will be to recommend workable strategies to the teacher to support the learner in the classroom, as stated by Mrs. More in the following: *I also help, I think I help by helping their teacher to understand the learner better in the classroom.* It is therefore increasingly agreed that teachers need such support in their work setting if they are to make maximum use of this opportunity and that all teachers should be enabled to do so (Hanks, 1990: 134-135).

Hanks (1990: 97) accepts that in-service support and professional development programmes can help teachers to respond more appropriately to the exceptional needs of learners and that all learners ought to have teachers capable of doing so. She further maintains that the support teacher can share her expertise and depth of understanding and help the teachers equip themselves with the skills required for taking on what will be, for many of them, a new role. Crawford and Porter (2004: 15) believe that when teachers have knowledge, classroom support, leadership and support from their school management and the broader educational system, an inclusive approach to quality education for all learners can take root in regular classrooms and schools. Mrs. More firmly believes that *constant interaction is needed between the support teacher and the class teacher.* Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (2004: 3) maintain that teachers have to wear a number of hats to be successful in helping all learners gain the skills necessary for becoming independent and productive members of society.

This changing role has also necessitated using new technologies and different resources, as the next theme will highlight.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Incorporating computer-aided learning to support learners**

According to Keup (2006: 1) there are many potential benefits of computer-aided instruction such as privacy, objectivity, timeliness of feedback, individuation of learning, flexibility, convenience, and a non-threatening learning environment. Furthermore these features of computer-aided instruction appear to offer an arena for the integration of educational goals with technological advancements, and maximize the economical use of existing resources in schools (Hanko, 1990: 135). In this case study this is achieved by using specific educational software programmes for all learners that have been identified as requiring additional support. The use of the computer programmes emphasizes provision of appropriate learning opportunities for learners with varying levels of academic skills through the same “core lesson”.

##### **Extending the reach**

According to Mrs. More *the needs of the children were so diverse, it was actually difficult in one group to accommodate and provide support... which made it difficult for me to have positive results*; this is why Porter (2001: 22) maintains that an essential element to accommodate learners with diverse needs is to utilize a variety of innovative and flexible teaching strategies. *Now with the computers, everything changed. Because it was possible for me to, in the same lesson, help every child at their level of competency... doing different things, moving quickly from one activity to the next; which would not have been possible without the computers. So that is also a part of moving from a remedial teacher to a support teacher. That was my experience. It grew basically out of a need and also was influenced by what was available in the school at the time.* Porter (1995), as cited in Carrington and Elkins (2002: 52) feels that an inclusive school culture must be committed to the improvement of strategies, programmes and use of available resources.

When the learners come for their support lesson they immediately begin to work on the computers. According to Mrs. More *some of them already know the procedures for working on some of the programmes and they work independently, while I take the others for individual help if necessary or sometimes I need to do an individual*

*assessment on a learner maybe it is required by the psychologist.* Mrs. More maintains that using computers is definitely beneficial because there is immediate feedback for learners, as they can see their scores immediately, can move swiftly from one activity to another so no time is wasted, can also learn basic computer commands and skills and many learners can work at the same time even if on different levels. The computer programmes have a built in memory that stores learners' results - therefore learners are able to continue from where they had last left off, ... *these programmes that we use, I can put the child on any level/programme and he/she can straight away get started because he/ she is doing his/ her own work.* Research conducted by McCormick (1994), cited in Balajathy, *et al.* (1999, 1-2) shows that a positive aspect about choosing computer-based interventions has to do with the amount of time-on-task necessary for positive learning effects. Independent computer instruction allows for more time-on-task than traditional methods. Mrs. More maintains that *it was when I started using the computers that I felt that I really turned from a remedial teacher function to a support teacher function.*

The positive feedback from other teachers indicates that her 'reach' has been effectively extended; such as *what are you doing?... because these children are always so keen to come to you, and they are always happy and smiley when they come back to class.* According to Mrs. More, this is true for the *junior primary* classes, as *they are absolutely no problem...in grade 5 the children... they become more aware that they are coming to this different class to the other children...and they want to know why. So I take their report... that I do their assessment, and I show them that there's a gap perhaps between their reading age and their chronological age and I explain to them why, what it is that causes it, if I can and normally they are very happy because they want to improve.*

### **Learners' sense of having fun**

According to Anderson (1999: 1), the use of software programmes provides a cognitive challenge as well as being interesting and having the potential for 'fun'. Although learning is taking place, learners view the use of the computer as a game and have the following to say, *she helps us in our lessons in maths and there are interesting games, I*

*like the games. Another learner said that there are spelling games, where you can get clever and clever and I just like the type of work she does. Most children concur that they like to work on the computer. Anderson (1999: 2) highlights that using computers motivates learning and also improves the attitudes of learners positively. As one learner states, I like it because I learn how to use the computer, read stories and listen to the teacher when she's reading us a story and when she is teaching us on the computer and this makes me feel good.*

### **A visible improvement**

At this particular primary school flexibility is achieved by using the computerized educational programmes which provide appropriate learning opportunities for learners with varying levels of academic skills through the same “core lesson” (Porter, 2001: 22). *When I started using the computers together with the reading and the maths programmes that I could get hold of, it made the work of supporting the children so much easier and so much more effective. I think that was basically the turning point because I was at a stage where I was really needing to move from being a remedial teacher; from working with children individually or in small groups of two to three children to where I need to deal with groups of 10 to 15 children at a time. Al Shureify (2006: 2) believes that making the educational system flexible so as to cater for a greater number of children, across the board, is important and can be termed inclusive education in its widest sense.*

Haughland (2000: 1-2) stresses that computers have an impact on learners because of the concrete experiences provided. The support teacher can intervene when learners appear frustrated or when there does not seem to be progress. Frequently, just a quick word or two, even from across the room can remind the learner what they need to do next. By observing what the learner is doing, the support teacher can help the learner. In addition, using computers enhance learners' self-concept. *I need to deal with groups of 10 to 15 children at a time which proved to me to be impossible ...so having the computer at this stage was just a godsend because it made all the difference to me. The way I helped, the way I supported... it also made all the difference to the effectiveness of the results that I got. It made all the difference to the children's*

*attitudes... the way they... before they found it, if I could put it like this 'hard slogging'. Now with the computers ... everything changed. Because it was possible for me to, in the same lesson help every child at their level of competency... doing different things, moving quickly from one activity to the next.* Mrs. More maintains that the added benefit of using computers is that *there is enough opportunity to work with individual learners even though over the years the little groups of learners needing support became bigger and bigger.* According to Al Shureity (2006: 2) support within the school system itself is more viable in the long run as it will be more cost-effective than the high rates of failures and repetitions which have a higher cost both in material and human terms.

To highlight the visible improvement, due to the support provided, the assessments were scrutinized, which will be explained next. Each new learner coming into the school is assessed by Mrs. More. There are specific assessments done for reading comprehension and spelling in English as well as specific age appropriate assessments for Mathematics. These group assessments are used to determine whether the child requires additional support or not, and are used merely as a guide to establish what sort of support is necessary. The support teacher also views the learner's class work books to determine any correlations. If the support teacher requires further information then she does individual assessments. At the end of the year the group assessments are repeated to establish whether and what kind of progress was made or not.

Furthermore, according to the support teacher all learners with a specific need come to her in the computer room to see how she can support them as well as their teachers. The learners who do require support from the support teacher are identified and attend lessons at specific times in class groups. Individual sessions are also done to strengthen specific underlying areas of weakness. Prior to the first session she has an idea whether the learner is attending for English, Mathematics or both, according to the information from their class teacher. Mrs. More. has specially designed record sheets that she uses to record scores and comments on an ongoing basis. In both, the individual and group support sessions, the focus is on English and Mathematics. In the group sessions Mrs. More uses educational computer software programmes with the learners. A variety of computer programmes are used in the support programme, some of which are Readers

are Leaders, CAMI Reading and Maths and I Love Spelling. All programmes used have a built-in editing feature as well as a store of accumulated results for each learner using a programme. Approximately 160 learners from the entire school population are supported by Mrs. More.

Two appendices, one for English (Appendix B) and one for Mathematics (Appendix C) are included, and display the results of the class of grade 4 learners at the end of 2005 and then again at the end of 2006, after 10 months of support. Each learner's individual progress is noted. The comparisons are done in this manner to determine if any progress was made after 10 months of support.

The table for English displays the results of 19 grade 4 learners currently in the support programme with Mrs. More. Of the 19 participants 18 showed an improvement. The remaining participant showed no change. Although a full analysis of the progress is not made here, the progress in months, indicate a visible improvement.

The table for Mathematics reveals the results of 19 learners currently in the support programme under the guidance of Mrs. More. Progress has been noticeable in some participants. Of the 19 participants 16 of them had improved whilst 2 participants' results decreased and 1 participant did not change at all over the current year of intervention. The most amount of progress made by a single participant is 30 months. 9 participants made progress over 10 months. Although a full analysis of the progress in Mathematics is not made here, as there are many variables which could influence the analysis, it is clear that there is a visible improvement.

The following case-study drawn from the documents provided by the support teacher tells its own story.

**PROFILE OF THE LEARNER:**

Name of learner : Thabiso Gumede      Chronological age at pre-test : 10 years 6 months  
Grade : 4      Gender : Male  
Learning area needing support : English reading and spelling  
Assessment tests used : Schonell Spelling, Burt Re-arranged Word Reading, Neale Analysis  
 Reading, Neale Analysis Comprehension, Young Maths

**Background**

Thabiso is a Zulu speaking learner that attended Sunnyside Primary School in Pinetown.

Initial assessment tests are conducted on all new learners coming into Sunnyside Primary School and so as a new learner at the school, he too was assessed by Mrs. More. Assessment tests mentioned above are administered on all new learners. This is a school policy devised upon at Sunnyside Primary School. His initial assessment test scores were rather low as indicated in the table below, so the School Guidance Team suggested that he be assessed by an educational psychologist. The psychologist's report indicated that the Thabiso had a low average, bordering on retarded, IQ score (according to the medical model), indicating that he was a slow learner and that a possible recommendation would be a special class placement. Furthermore, the qualitative evaluation noted that there were no areas of strength. According to the psychologist's report uncertainty with regards to the child's actual chronological age was raised.. It was also imperative to remember that this child was tested through the medium of English even though he is a Zulu speaking individual.

Thabiso however joined Mrs. More's support programme offered during the school day. He joined a group of nine other learners who attended lessons in the same time slot. Each group comprised of both boys and girls and their needs varied from specific learning difficulties in reading and spelling, attention deficit problems, hyperactive learners to second language learners. In the year Thabiso attended approximately forty sessions over a ten month period. The duration of each session was thirty minutes long. Mrs. More used computers and suitable software to enhance her support programme. She was able to accommodate up to ten learners at a time due to the fact that she utilized computers. Specific software such as Readers are Leaders, Cami Maths and I Love Spelling were sourced to be used in her support sessions.

**Results**

The table below shows Thabiso's progress at the end of ten months, in which he had forty sessions of support.

The scores are indicated in years and months.

NAME OF TEST	SCORES BEFORE SUPPORT	SCORES AFTER SUPPORT	PROGRESS
Schonell Spelling	below 6 years	6yrs 11mths	+ 18mths
Burt Word Reading	5yrs 9mths	7yrs 5mths	+20mths
Neales Analysis Reading Accuracy	5yrs 10mths	7yrs 9mths	+23mths
Neales Analysis Comprehension	6yrs 0mths	7yrs 9mths	+21mths
Young Maths	7yrs 2mths	8yrs 6mths	+18mths

**Analysis**

Thabiso showed marked improvement in all of the assessment tests, indicating that support had positive results bearing in mind the feedback from the psychologist that he is a slow learner. This implies that teachers should cautiously analyse recommendations made by psychologists especially in the context of the diversity of learners in South Africa. Furthermore with appropriate support built on the learners' level of functioning and with appropriate support learners are sure to benefit. This is in line with what WP6 says about learning: namely that all children can learn, provided that there is flexibility in the curriculum and that appropriate support is provided.

Reviewing all that is being said about the use of computers in enhancing remedial intervention, it becomes obvious that computers can be used in schools to meet the needs of a greater number of learners experiencing barriers to learning. This does seem a cost effective and economical avenue to embark on.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Reflections on her changed role as a support teacher**

According to Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (1999: 70) teachers are the people who make learning possible, and their own attitudes, beliefs and feelings with regard to what is happening in school and in the classroom are of crucial importance. Teachers in South African schools are currently expected to make major changes in the way they understand teaching and learning. Teachers certainly need the time and the psychological space and they may need support to be able to focus on the positive rather than the negative aspects of change.

##### **A supportive management team**

As with any venture it is important that one has the commitment and enthusiasm of the whole school, especially those in leadership positions. Mrs. More *says that by having had a very supportive management team, that's my principal and the HOD that's what has actually made it possible to implement the things that I thought important. They gave me the, 'carte blanche'... they did not restrict what I did. In the other important part in the support of the management team was that, that it helps to... to get the support from the rest of the staff.* According to Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (2004: 3) support programmes need to respond effectively to the demands of an inclusive educational system and in particular to the needs of the teachers who will be directly involved in the day to day implementation of these programmes. To do this effectively educational support must move away from an outdated focus on exclusion, individualism and isolation to an emphasis on ecosystemic values, such as promoting sustainability, alliance, co-operation and mutual support.

The latter elements form the basis of collaborative relationships which are based on direct interaction among co-equal partners, who voluntarily participate, make decisions

together and grow to trust and respect one another. Crawford and Porter (2004: 27) further reiterate that at the school level, the principal and other school-based team members should establish a positive, supportive and welcoming climate for all learners. School leaders should establish mutual support among teachers by creating a climate and work routine that favours teamwork and collaboration. The participant reiterates the idea that her changed role was underpinned by a supportive principal, teachers and an innovative school environment. According to Hanks (1990: 102), it is important to state that the aims of support are congruent with the interests of their school and would, by helping to maximize its professional resources, contribute to the furtherance of its professional goals.

### **Contributing to learning and development**

It has been past practice that schools with special classes have specialist teachers who work only with those learners in the special class, rarely more than eighteen learners in a class. More often than not these special class teachers feel alienated from the rest of the school as they always seem to function only within their own little unit. Similarly teachers that come into a school on a part-time basis often share the same feeling of alienation and of not really fitting into the school. For the support teacher the difference lies in the interaction with all teachers on a continuous basis. Furthermore such contribution to the whole school changes her role from an outsider to a so called insider. A support teacher gets involved with the whole school and gets to know what is happening with all learners and teachers.

Mrs. More notes that since working as a support teacher *I am working with a lot of children, many children. I would say out of every class, there is probably between 6 to 8 children who come to me specifically to improve their English skills, not because of a specific learning disability, but because they are second language learners.* This indicates that Mrs. More is able to render support to more and more learners due to the computers and computer-assisted programmes. Porter (2001: 32) states that if implemented properly, inclusive education services can be less expensive to implement and operate than special education services, have a broader reach than traditional special education in terms of positive educational and social impacts on children, contribute

significantly to the ongoing professional development and job satisfaction of educators and produce better morale and team effort in the school environment. According to Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (1999: 35) the Salamanca Statement claims that inclusion is not only cost-efficient, but also cost-effective. Hay (2003: 138) reiterates that the success of inclusive education in South Africa will largely depend on the ability of educational support staff to implement the necessary paradigm shifts in their minds and work.

Mrs. More maintains that *there certainly must be understanding between teacher support and class based teachers*. If the teacher experiences a specific problem the teacher should feel free to approach the support teacher. The teacher support is also flexible and is influenced by the teaching phase, for example, *the Junior Primary Phase is a lot more flexible than the Senior Primary Phase. The reason being is that the Senior Phase is far more structured and often has different teachers for subjects such as music and media*.

Support teachers face the particular task of showing that their special skills can support those of their colleagues. They have to deal with questions, many unvoiced in the teachers' mind, summarize findings with regard to such unvoiced questions as 'will you listen really listen?' and 'does asking for assistance imply incompetence?' The reason for the support teacher's understanding in this regard is that teachers are often uneasy about admitting to experiencing difficulties to those who seem to manage or whom they may perceive as critical, as wanting to tell them how to do their job better or as likely to blame them for the learner's shortcomings (Hanko, 1990: 101). Hence the way in which the support teacher lends support is of extreme importance in enhancing teaching and learning and development.

### **Professional fulfillment of the support teacher**

Mrs. More maintains that *when I started using the computers that's when I can say that I really turned from a remedial teacher function to a support teacher function. I can't give you the exact date now, but it's probably between 5, between probably 6 to 7 years thereabouts that I've been working in that capacity*. Carrington and Elkins (2002: 57) maintain that the flexibility of support and the variety in teaching approaches to meet

the needs of learners and teachers ensures that more help is available to all. Being able to help certainly seems the way Mrs. More prefers.

According to Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (1999: 70), teachers are the people who make learning possible; their own attitudes, beliefs and feelings with regard to what is happening in the school and in the classroom are of crucial importance. Furthermore it is generally accepted that change is challenging and may be perceived as either a threat or an opportunity. Mrs. More recalls *we had a little computer room that became available, so I put in a request for this room for my remedial work. It was originally used for a bit of computer skill teaching but the room proved to be too small and then they opened up this big computer room, where they had between 15 and 16 computers and the smaller room had about 5 or 6 computers so I put in a request as this for my remedial work.* Mrs. More saw the change as an opportunity to reach out to a greater number of learners requiring support and believes that *I was really fortunate to have the facilities available at this school.*

Engelbrecht, *et al.*, (1999: 71) points out that, teachers are human beings with individual attitudes to difference and disability, formed in a context of prevailing social attitudes. Many may initially resist the notion of inclusion. It has also been found, however, that experience tends to change attitudes. As Mrs. More states: *I had to motivate for every cent that I used to set this up, it certainly was a difficulty, but in the end even that became easier once people saw the changes that had helped the children.*

When posed with the question as to whether Mrs. More enjoys her new role, her response was *Oh yes, yes, yes.* According to Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff and Swart (2004: 1) teachers who have a high level of belief in their own professional and personal competencies, are also more likely to want to work collaboratively with other professionals on various learner-related concerns, and in so doing contribute to the better good of the whole school community.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the findings of the research undertaken was presented and discussed. The following chapter goes on to deal with conclusions drawn from the findings - and some implications are put forth.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

*Education is for improving the lives of others*

*Marian W. Edelman*

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

A summary of the findings, as well as the implications thereof, limitations of this study, as well as recommendations for further research, unfolds systematically in this chapter. The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of the support teacher as she negotiated her role from a remedial teacher to that of a support teacher. Also highlighted is the extent to which using computers enhances the learning and support process, allowing for a greater number of learners to be reached in the support programme.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY

##### 5.2.1 THEME 1: Experiences as a remedial teacher

Experiences as a remedial teacher highlight that remedial teaching in the past focused on learners with specific learning disabilities only, whereby remedial lessons were offered to only a select few learners, based on specified criteria, and necessitated by the limited number that could be accommodated on an individual basis or a small group of two or three. This method of intervention also meant that support was restricted to certain learners only. A learner had to have a specific learning disability to benefit from this intervention. Learners who were classified as slow learners for example, would not qualify for this support as they would not meet the specified criteria such as a specific score range in an intellectual quotient (IQ) assessment.

This type of remedial intervention most often took place with little interaction with the class teacher, or with the class teacher often getting involved with the intervention. It

was more often the situation since the remedial teacher was usually a part time teacher or someone who worked only certain days at the school. Although Mrs. More was employed as the remedial teacher on a full time basis she felt that she could not reach out to all learners. She found that learners such as second language learners and slow learners were left with no support and teachers having to find their own means to help these learners. As the school population became more diverse and more second language learners began to enter the school a need developed to support more learners, in the area of language especially.

There is no doubt that spending time in supporting learners may make a very substantial difference to their performance. According to White Paper 6 (DoE.: 2001) a wider spread of educational support services should be created to be able to accommodate all learners and that schools should have enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners. White Paper 6 (DoE.: 2001) mentions support at three levels: namely low-intensive support in ordinary schools, moderate support in full-service schools and high-intensive educational support in special schools. An ordinary school, like the school chosen for this research, should therefore provide low-intensive support within the school. Intervention done on a one-to-one and a one-to-a-small group basis is not cost-efficient or cost-effective in an ordinary school and certainly cannot reach all learners. One-to-one and one-to-a-small group support will be provided in special schools for learners who require high-intensive educational support.

### **5.2.2 THEME 2: A more constructive role**

In taking on a more constructive role this ordinary primary school took the initiative of creating a support system enabling it to accommodate a greater number of learners requiring support and in this way took on the ownership for supporting its learners. This school was aware that the learner population was rather diverse and that far more learners required support. Under the guidance of Mrs. More the school took up the challenge of confronting and managing the demands of diversity of the learners as they tried to put into place a suitable support programme. More and more schools are being resourced with computers either by the Department of Education, overseas funding, and

funds raised within a school and even by the private sector. This school took the responsibility by setting up their own computer learning centre and endeavoured to provide direct service delivery within the school which supported far more learners. These included learners with specific learning difficulties, learners learning in a second language who are not yet proficient, slow learners as well as learners that are weak in a specific area for any reason. The support teacher was able to help many more learners.

The support teacher was equipped to handle various situations providing support as best as she could. It is imperative that the support teacher has excellent skills to work with a diverse range of learners, and with the aid of computers can help a greater number of learners. The number of learners supported is far greater compared to one-to-one and one-to-a-small group remedial intervention. There is no doubt that greater flexibility at the school assists in meeting the needs of all learners. Time out of the classroom is limited to times that would impact the least on learner's academic progress, and is negotiated between the class teacher and the support teacher.

What White Paper 6 advises for ordinary schools is the creation of an institution-based support team (IST). This was taken up by Sunnyside Primary. The primary function of this team is to co-ordinate learner and teacher support. This team made up of teachers within the school draws on the expertise within the team to support the learning and teaching process by addressing learner, educator and institutional needs. The support teacher's expertise in this case is utilized effectively and constructively to help both learners and teachers. In the past remedial teachers worked in relative isolation, however since the inception of the support establishment at the school, there is ongoing interaction between teachers and the support teacher. This encourages collaboration and teamwork. The additional support for teachers certainly encourages teachers to assume greater responsibility for their learners.

Teachers as well as learners were supported. The learners enjoyed the group interaction and tutoring as it enabled them to understand better what was being taught. They also felt that they learnt better and they appreciated the direct assistance from the support teacher. Learners generally viewed the support positively because it made them feel clever and they also felt more confident back in the classroom. Some learners did have

negative feelings about leaving their classroom. It therefore suggests that working carefully and respectfully with all learners is required to facilitate acceptance of the support provided.

### **5.2.3 THEME 3: Experiences of her changing role**

Although inclusive educational practice places demands on the classroom teacher, teachers need to be empowered to be able to support all learners. It becomes clear that teamwork and collaboration is necessary for whole school development. Support services need to support teachers and the school, and in that way teachers will be able to teach all learners in their classroom

The formation of the School Guidance Team was useful and beneficial and served the needs of the school as best as it could. Due to commitments such as extramural activities and sport coaching There is perhaps a need to meet more often though. The School Guidance Team or IST plays a vital role in creating structures to support all learners. The collaborative working together of all teachers, support teacher and management develops ownership and responsibility within the school. The shared responsibility that existed at Sunnyside Primary allowed teachers to work together, sharing expertise, skills and knowledge. It is important for teachers to have ongoing support especially in our South African school context since schools have rather diverse learner populations and a greater number of learners needing support.

### **5.2.4 THEME 4: Incorporating computer-aided learning to support learners**

The introduction of computers in the school increased the teaching resources in the school, and a far greater number of learners therefore were able to receive support at the same time. Computers also allowed the learners to work at their own pace and to be able to work at an appropriate level of ability. It is evident that the use of computers does enhance the learning process, and that a greater number of learners receive support.

Experiences and feelings described by some learners indicate that these support sessions are beneficial and helpful to them, that they enjoyed the lessons, which were viewed as fun and as a game. It is certainly a fun way for learning to take place. Together with learning taking place, learners also learnt basic computer skills, something so useful in the work environment. Learning should be fun and participative, which is in keeping with the principles of OBE. Hence implications for the classroom, is that all learning should be fun.

With the use of computers a greater number of learners are supported in the year, and gains are made in the progress of the learners. Schools intending to embark on this type of support will realize that computers technologically advance learners, and as well allow them to make progress. What is important though is how we get them to learn, and at this ordinary primary school the use of computers with programmes for English and Mathematics certainly helped.

#### **5.2.4 THEME 5: Reflections of her changed role as a support teacher**

In reflecting upon the changed role as a support teacher, the importance of teamwork and support from the school management team is emphasized. It certainly helps to have a supportive management team in a school. When people share the same ideals, goals and have the same passions they together become a driving force.

By becoming the support teacher a bigger contribution to the learning and development of many learners is made, also by helping many teachers understand their learners better. The changed role has arguably benefited the whole school community's well-being. Furthermore the researcher's observation is that the support teacher shows great passion for what she does, and displays a great deal of professionalism in dealing with both learners and teachers.

### **5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

Findings indicate that both educators and learners benefit from the additional support provided by the support teacher and it is also evident that the use of computers enhances the learning and support process.

Since inclusive education is a relatively new trend, all schools should take on the responsibility to promote staff development programmes and provide indirect service delivery to support their teachers. Teacher support is vital to guide and support all teachers who lack the training to deal with the diverse needs of learners in their mainstream classrooms. It is important that all schools provide suitable professional development for teachers, emotional support and guidance for teachers to be able to teach appropriately in the classroom, with a range of diverse learners.

Teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops held at their schools, as well as attend workshops promoted by the Department of Education. This will help teachers keep abreast with new trends and strategies to be able to deal with learners with diverse needs - particularly those learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Network and support meetings must be organized, which would empower teachers to grow professionally. Together with all this indirect service the support teacher must be able to assist the class teacher to identify learners requiring additional support and intervention.

The School Guidance Team (or IST) had a pivotal role to play in the school used in this research. Even though they call it the School Guidance Team it is undoubtedly serving the same purpose which White Paper 6 calls an institutional-based support team. It is therefore imperative that all schools should endeavour to establish such teams at school. This is beneficial to all schools, because it draws on the assets and expertise within a school. Responsibility should become a whole school process. When all involved share responsibility, then everyone becomes accountable. Basically any teacher that is keen, enthusiastic, motivated, sees the need for change and is willing to work as a team using common sense, share ideas and is prepared to learn from each other can be in the

support team. In this way no learner will be left without the necessary intervention and support that they require.

The increase in enrolment of learners with difficulties into regular classrooms will necessitate greater support for teachers who are now required to provide additional personal attention to cater for the specific needs of these learners. As Ashbaker and Morgan (2001: 60) predict, the number of teacher aides, classroom assistants, instructional assistants and other educational paraprofessionals will soon increase. Given a continuing focus on inclusiveness in the classroom, there exists a strong need for teacher assistants to support teachers and the academic and social needs for learners with disabilities (Broadbent et al, 2006: 10).

According to Crawford & Porter (2004: 24), university-based teacher education programmes can develop curricula that prepare teacher candidates for diversity and inclusion in regular classroom. However for those teachers already in the profession it is necessary to have ongoing professional development either within the school or from the Department of Education. The Department of Education should work in close collaboration with tertiary institutions when planning the course of study for teacher training to ensure that all teachers develop skills to teach in inclusive classrooms. In this way all new teachers will be prepared to deal with exclusivity in the classroom.

Teachers should be helped and guided by the institutional-based support team (IST) to organize their classrooms in ways that foster the learning of all their learners. Schools must be restructured to support teachers in all efforts of trying to maintain an inclusive classroom. Schools must be able to create contexts within which pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties can participate, contribute and experience feelings of success. All schools must ensure flexibility and collaboration regarding school curriculum and teacher interaction. There should be adequate training, in-service courses and workshops on an ongoing basis, so that all teachers can teach in an inclusive classroom. In addition to that, teachers must be provided with sufficient support to be able to teach learners with diverse needs.

In the contemporary world, and also in S.A. the use of technology is burgeoning, and schools should keep abreast with new developments and incorporate it in their schooling contexts. In this regard computer-assisted learning and support are critical in achieving quality education for all.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

Only one support teacher was interviewed to relate her change in role and the type of support she offered related to Sunnyside Primary School only. Furthermore due to time constraints the interviewer was not able to interview many learners. The researcher was not able to conduct interviews with learners from the various grades that were in the support programme. Only the grade four learners were chosen. Those that were willing to participate and those that had parental consent were interviewed. The interview with the learners was a focus group interview. Time constraints did not allow for individual interviews.

#### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further research is recommended in the following areas:

- Explore and compare the support provided at various schools.
- Explore the effect of the support provided in other grades.
- Explore the life history of a remedial teacher.
- Evaluate the functionality and effectiveness of school support within an inclusive setting.
- Explore whether and how computer-aided support programmes are used in schools.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

The implementation of more inclusive systems of education will be possible only if schools themselves are committed to becoming more inclusive. It certainly has become evident that some schools like Sunnyside Primary School are taking up the challenge and setting up institution-based support teams and that together is embarking upon the inclusion journey, after drawing on its own creativity and trying to remain relevant by exploring the use of technology. The involvement of schools in inclusion projects is certainly essential if national policy is to be translated into the realities of practice especially as it is known that at some time in a learner's schooling career support may be required, be it in terms of behaviour, emotions, academy or social issues. The development of enabling mechanisms such as suitable support structures and appropriate forms of the curriculum and assessment is therefore vital in creating the right context for developing an inclusive educational approach whereby all learners are catered for.

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## APPENDIX A

**TABLE A: DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS: GRADE 4 LEARNERS**

Participant	Name of participant	Age	Gender	Grade	Mother Tongue	No. of years in the intervention programme
1	Khwezi	10y 3m	M	4	Z	2
2	Celine	11y 0m	F	4	E	3
3	Nkosi	13y 1m	M	4	Z	3
4	Wandile	12y 5m	M	4	Z	1
5	Phiwo	11y 11m	M	4	Z	3
6	Vuyile	11y 4m	M	4	Z	1
7	Zama	11y 11m	F	4	Z	1
8	Pretty	11y 6m	F	4	Z	2
9	Brad	11y 2m	M	4	E	1
10	Mondli	11y 3m	M	4	Z	2
11	Lungelo	10y 2m	M	4	Z	1
12	Philile	11y 9m	F	4	Z	2
13	Mbali	10y 11m	F	4	Z	2
14	Gwinvera	10y 9m	F	4	Z	3
15	Mandla	12y 1m	M	4	Z	3
16	Bongiwe	12y 6m	F	4	Z	3
17	Siphesihle	12y 3m	M	4	Z	3
18	Simphiwe	12y 1m	M	4	Z	3
19	Duran	12y 4m	M	4	E	3

## APPENDIX B

### RESULT FOR ENGLISH

Participant Number	Name of participant	End of the year score: 2005 in years and months	End of the year score: 2006 in years and months	Progress if any in months
1	Khwezi	7y 6m	8y 6m	+ 12m
2	Celine	8y 2m	9y 0m	+ 10m
3	Nkosi	8y 2m	9y 4m	+ 14m
4	Wandile	7y 8m	8y 10m	+ 14m
5	Phiwo	8y 7m	9y 4m	+ 9m
6	Vuyile	8y 0m	9y 1m	+ 13m
7	Zama	7y 4m	8y 6m	+ 14m
8	Pretty	8y 8m	10y 4m	+ 20m
9	Brad	7y 2m	8y 3m	+ 13m
10	Mondli	8y 11m	9y 1m	+ 2m
11	Lungelo	7y 2m	8y 3m	+ 13m
12	Philile	9y 0m	9y 8m	+ 8m
13	Mbali	8y 10m	9y 4m	+ 6m
14	Gwinvera	7y 10m	10y 4m	+ 30m
15	Mandla	8y 11m	9y 7m	+ 8m
16	Bongiwe	10y 7m	10y 7m	+ 0m
17	Siphesihle	8y 0m	8y 10m	+ 10m
18	Simphiwe	8y 11m	9y 7m	+ 8m
19	Duran	9y 10m	9y 11m	+ 1m

## APPENDIX C

### RESULT FOR MATHEMATICS

Participant Number	Name of participant	End of the year score: 2005 in years and months	End of the year score: 2006 in years and months	Progress if any in months
1	Khwezi	8y 1m	8y 6m	+ 5m
2	Celine	8y 6m	9y 8m	+ 14m
3	Nkosi	8y 9m	9y 4m	+ 7m
4	Wandile	8y 3m	8y 10m	+ 7m
5	Phiwo	8y 3m	9y 1m	+ 10m
6	Vuyile	9y 3m	9y 1m	- 2m
7	Zama	7y 5m	7y 10m	+ 5m
8	Pretty	9y 5m	9y 8m	+ 3m
9	Brad	9y 4m	10m 1m	+ 9m
10	Mondli	8y 7m	9y 5m	+ 10m
11	Lungelo	8y 2m	8y 10m	+ 8m
12	Philile	7y 1m	8y 2m	+ 13m
13	Mbali	7y 2m	7y 10m	+ 8m
14	Gwinvera	8y 5m	8y 6m	+ 1m
15	Mandla	9y 1m	9y 0m	- 1m
16	Bongiwe	7y 2m	8y 5m	+ 15m
17	Siphesihle	9y 1m	9y 1m	+ 0m
18	Simphiwe	7y 7m	7y 8m	+ 1m
19	Duran	7y 11m	8y 11m	+ 12m

## APPENDIX D

### EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH MRS. MORE

**Interviewer:** I would like to know what are your experiences as a support teacher?

**Interviewee:** Alright, that's a very wide question...in what regard? Experiences regarding what? What do you mean specifically?

**Interviewer:** Your experiences from being a remedial teacher to now changing that role to a support teacher.

**Interviewee:** Oh! As is happened, it happened over a period of time and it happened almost by itself. It grew out of the need that the school had, that presented itself at school. At first I used to work with the learners individually in small groups. The little groups became bigger and bigger which made it more difficult for me to have positive results for one and secondly, in second place the needs of the learners were so diverse, it was actually difficult in one group to accommodate and provide what they needed (silence).

**Interviewer:** So what did you decide to do?

**Interviewee:** At a certain point we had a bridging class. We had a teacher coming in specifically coming in to do bridging work with the second language learners but in the end everybody felt that the bridging class wasn't really the answer (silence-school bell ringing). So what happened was that the bridging class was then basically stopped and at our guidance team meetings it became clear that these learners were in desperate need of support and help but they were now left to their own devices and the class teacher needing to help them it seemed it was becoming quite desperate. So I decided to also try and help them in small groups together with my other learners that I was taking already for English. And at the same time we had a little computer room that became available.

## APPENDIX E

### EXAMPLE OF FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT

**Interviewer:** I would like to know how you feel about coming to Mrs. More for extra lessons? Shall we start with Khwezi?

**Khwezi:** I feel happy, I feel happy because I learn more and I feel clever. So that is why I feel confident.

**Interviewer:** Good and you Nkosi?

**Nkosi:** I feel quite happy coming to Mrs. More, because she helps us with our reading.

**Interviewer:** And how are you getting on with your reading?

**Nkosi:** Very good.

**Interviewer:** That's really good, yes Simphiwe?

**Simphiwe:** I feel happy because I learn more in spelling and Maths.

**Interviewer:** What about your spelling and Maths?

**Simphiwe:** Miss, I'm doing better in class.

**Interviewer:** Oh! That's lovely... Duran would you like to talk?

**Duran:** I like it because I learn how to use the computer, read stories and listen to the teacher when she is reading a story and she teaches us well.

APPENDIX F  
PERMISSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Faculty of Education



Dear Mr Alwar

Permission to do research at a school in Durban

In this study, *From Remedial Teacher to School-Based Support Educator: A Case Study of a Primary School in Kwa-Zulu Natal*, I will explore how the skills of the remedial teacher can be utilized effectively and to full benefit as a school-based support teacher. In recent years the issue of inclusion has been the centre of many discussions, with emphasis on the rights of all pupils to be educated in a mainstream school wherever possible. This project will also explore structures for the provision of support for the paradigm shift from a fragmented deficit model of adjustment and explore how a greater number of learners can be helped. This study attempts to address these issues.

The key (critical) questions that I intend to answer by undertaking this research are:

1. What are the experiences of a remedial teacher changing her role to that of a support teacher, within the South African Education policy framework?
2. How did the remedial teacher negotiate and change her role from a remedial teacher to a support teacher?
3. What service delivery strategies are used to help learners with learning difficulties?
4. How does it influence school personnel and learners who are experiencing learning difficulties?

To be able to answer these critical questions, I plan to interview the support teacher, as she is the main informant. I will also interview the school principal, and some learners who are in this support programme. The interviews will vary between 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the participants. All interviews will be tape recorded. To gain further in-depth insight into structures of the support programme, I will observe some of the support

teacher's lessons and make some field notes. I will also look at documents of learners' results for the beginning of the year as well as end of the year, for further analysis.

Universal principals such as honesty, justice, confidentiality, trustworthiness and respect will direct my research. Participants will be treated with fairness and honesty, and I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

You are more than welcome to contact Prof. de Lange on 031- 2601342, for any further information relating to this study.

Thank you for your co-operation.  
Yours Faithfully

-----  
Mrs. S. Naidu ( Shakun)  
0844035997

2006-08- 8

APPENDIX G  
ETHICAL CLEARANCE



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

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8 AUGUST 2006

MRS. S NAIDU (202520281)  
EDUCATION

Dear Mrs. Naidu

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER : HSS/06327A**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"From remedial teacher to school – based support educator: A case study of a primary school in KwaZulu Natal"

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 Research Office (Derek Buchler)  
cc: Supervisor (Prof. N de Lange)

**APPENDIX H**  
**INFORMED CONSENT**  
**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Faculty of Education**



**Edgewood Campus**

**School of Education-DBN**

**TITLE:** The changing role of a remedial teacher to a support teacher: a case-study of a primary school in Pinetown.

Dear Participant

In this study I will explore how the skills of the remedial teacher can be utilized effectively and to full benefit as a school-based support teacher. In recent years the issue of inclusion has been the centre of many discussions, with emphasis on the rights of all pupils to be educated in a mainstream school wherever possible. This project will also explore structures for the provision of support for the paradigm shift from a fragmented deficit model of adjustment and explore how a greater number of learners can be helped. This study attempts to address these issues.

The key(critical) questions that I intend to answer by undertaking this research are:

1. What are the experiences of a remedial teacher changing her role to that of a support teacher, within the South African Education policy framework?
2. How did the remedial teacher negotiate and change her role from a remedial teacher to a support teacher?
3. What service delivery strategies are used to help learners with learning difficulties?
4. How does it influence school personnel and learners who are experiencing learning difficulties?

To be able to answer these critical questions, I plan to interview the remedial teacher, as she is the main informant. I will also interview some learners who are in this support programme. All interviews will be tape recorded. To gain further in-depth insight into structures of the support programme, I will observe some of their lessons and make

some field notes. I will also look at documents of learners' results for the beginning of the year as well as end of the year, for further analysis.

Universal principals such as honesty, justice, confidentiality, trustworthiness and respect will direct my research. Participants will be treated with fairness and honesty, and I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

You, the participant, must thus fully understand the reason behind the study and the need for the interview, before giving your consent. Consent is voluntary, knowing that the information is only intended for research purposes by the researcher and Prof. N. de Lange from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. As a participant, you are more than welcome to contact Prof. de Lange on 031- 2601342, for any further information relating to this study.

Participants are also free to withdraw from this research at any stage without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. The gathered data will be disposed of as soon as I have analysed it.

Thank you for your co-operation.  
Yours Faithfully

-----  
Mrs. S. Naidu ( Shakun)

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### **DECLARATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_(full name), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project.

I consent / give permission for my child/ ward (delete which does not apply), to participate in the interview and observation.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw / withdraw my child or guardian ( delete which does not apply), from the project , at any time, should I so desire.

-----  
Signature of participant/ parent/ guardian

-----  
**Date**

**APPENDIX I**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FROM PARENTS/GUIDANCE**

MRS. SHAKUN NAIDU  
8- 31<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE  
UMHLATUZANA  
4092

17 JULY 2006

**DEAR PARENT/ GUARDIAN**

I AM CONDUCTING A RESEARCH STUDY ON TEACHER SUPPORT GIVEN TO LEARNERS. I AM USING SUNNYSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL AS MY CASE STUDY.

I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOUR CHILD/WARD, WHO IS CURRENTLY IN THIS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME. THE RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW AND YOUR CHILD'S/ WARD'S NAME WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL. THE INTERVIEW WILL BE CONDUCTED AT SUNNYSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

PLEASE FILL IN THE RESPONSE SLIP AND RETURN TO MRS. MORE

THANKING YOU

\_\_\_\_\_

MRS. S NAIDU

\_\_\_\_\_

PRINCIPAL

\_\_\_\_\_

**RESPONSE**

**I APPROVE/ DO NOT APPROVE OF MY CHILD BEING INTERVIEWED**

\_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE OF  
PARENT/GUARDIAN**

\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE**