CREATING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS:
CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

By

NOMBULELO PRISCILLA ESTHER YENI

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University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education

SUPERVISOR:
Dr Sithabile Ntombela

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DECLARATION

I, Nombulelo Yeni, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is submitted for the Masters of Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education. This dissertation has not been submitted to any other university before.

………………………....   ....
Signature   Date

I, Dr S. Ntombela, the candidate's supervisor, hereby agree to the submission of this dissertation.

....
Supervisor   Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late husband Zibusiso Yeni and my daughter Ayabonga.

Thank you for your love, patience and support during the long hours I spent working on this dissertation

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ABSTRACT

A qualitative case study of critical consideration for the SMT in developing inclusive schools is reported in this study. The study was conducted in one rural district in the south coast area in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The aim of the study was to determine the SMT's understanding of inclusive education and to establish what they consider as important in ensuring that their schools are inclusive. Lastly, it sought to identify the challenges that they faced in making their school inclusive. This was a single case study.

The study targeted 5 SMT members who were involved in a focus group interview. Data analysis in the study influenced by systems theory. The two concepts defined are inclusive education and school management teams. Both the theoretical framework and the theory were used as lenses to understand the critical considerations for the SMTs in developing inclusive schools.

The findings gathered from the study indicate that the SMT had very limited and often distorted understanding of the policy of inclusive education. It was also clear that they are not sure of what they consider critical for them as the SMT in the process of developing inclusive schools. At the same time they were able to indicate many challenges that they are faced with in their school. The findings suggest that this might be lack or inappropriate training on inclusive education as well as misunderstandings on inclusive strategies.

The study concludes that the introduction of policy processes that requires implementation should ensure that all stakeholders involved are brought on board. It is important to get buy in from other educators to embrace diversity and understand the purpose. The process of paradigm shift is difficult to individuals especially when there are so many changes in the system, people tend to resist change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL CONCLUSION

APPENDICES

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

ABET:	Adult Basic Education
HIV and AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBOs:	Community-Based Organizations
DoE:	Department of Education
ETC:	etcetera
EWP:	Education White Paper
HIV:	Human Immune Virus
HOD:	Head of Department
KZN:	Kwa-Zulu Natal
ILSTs:	Institution Level Support Teams
LTSM:	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NCS:	National Curriculum Statement
NCSET:	National Commission on Special Education and Training
NCESS:	National Committee on Education Support Services
NEPA:	National Policy Act
NGOs:	Non-governmental Organizations
OBE:	Outcomes-based
OVCs:	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
SASA:	South African Schools Act
SASSA:	South African Social Service Agency
SGB:	School Governing Bodies
SIAS:	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMTs:	School Management Teams
RSA:	Republic of South Africa
UNCRC:	United Nations Convention on the rights of the child

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Inclusive education is not simply a question of making special arrangements for some learners with disabilities in a system designed for others. It is about designing education for all in such a way that it becomes 'normal' for differences to be accommodated rather than seen as exceptions. (Green, 1991:6)

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1994, the South African Education Department had 18 racially divided education departments (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 2001). Education policies and practices were designed to perpetuate inequalities especially along racial lines. In addition, the education system was divided into regular and special education, each catering for 'normal' and 'disabled' learners respectively. During those days children with disabilities were denied access to full social participation especially in disadvantaged communities (Department of Education, 1997).

In disadvantaged communities there was inadequate provision of resources for children with special education needs, be it in mainstream or special schools. The researcher still remembers that during her school days there were children who struggled with school work, children who were the laughing stock because they seemed to be slower than the majority. Although the researcher did not understand what the problem was then, now she knows that those children had special needs and were mainstreamed by default due to shortages of specialised facilities in our communities.

In the new dispensation, these past imbalances have been, and continue to be addressed. For example the Bill of Rights in our Constitution entrenches the right to basic education for all citizens (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Similarly, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 also stresses the principle of education as a social justice issue (DoE, 1996). This act also emphasises the importance of all learners, including those with disabilities, accessing public

schools in their neighbourhood. The reason for that is simply to increase access to education for all learners. In increasing access to education for all, issues of equity, race, gender and disability are taken into account.

It was in the same vein that in July 2001, the Department of Education launched Education White Paper (EWP) 6: Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001). All the consultation process that gave birth to this policy highlighted that specialized education and support had predominantly been provided for a small percentage of learners with disabilities within special schools and special classes. Special education services were concentrated in urban areas and the majority of vulnerable children were not supported (DoE, 2009). Obviously such practice could no longer be justified as it was not in line with the Constitution of the country.

This policy of inclusion has been interpreted as being biased towards the accommodation of learners with disabilities within mainstream schools (DoE, 2001). However, whilst the policy does seek to redress neglect suffered by children with disabilities, it does take into account all other problems that hinder a learner from accessing or benefiting from the education system. These have been termed barriers to learning and development and include poverty, negative attitudes, inadequate educator development, and factors that place children at risk like crime, to name a few (DoE, 2001). It is important that the education system responds to the needs of all individual learners. However, that is not easy due to the large number of learners who experience barriers to learning and development in this country, including those who are out-of-school as well. Nonetheless, Education White Paper 6 commits the Department of Education to provide access to education for all learners by addressing or reducing the impact of barriers to learning and development. This policy is concerned with offering all learners opportunities to learn and giving them support to access quality education. EWP 6 outlines a number of systemic changes that are necessary so that the education system is able to accommodate and support all learners by offering quality education (DoE, 2001).

In the new dispensation it has become very important that education institutions are accessible to all and that the organization, teaching practices and culture of all education institutions promote access, retention and achievement for all learners (DoE, 2001). Similarly, section 5 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (DoE, 1996), highlights that public schools must admit all learners and that schools should serve the learners' education requirements without unfair discrimination. To a large extent by so doing the education system would have contributed positively in establishing a caring and humane society.

1.2   FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This study is about how schools understand and operationalize inclusive education. Specifically the focus of the study was on finding out what the School Management Team (SMT) members consider critical in ensuring that their schools are inclusive. The SMT is a group of educators promoted to management positions for the purpose of running the school. The team includes the principal who is the head of the school, deputy principal and / or head of the phase or department at school. The job of the principal according to Employment of Educators Act (EEA), 76 of 1998 is to ensure that the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation, regulation and personnel administration measures as prescribed. Another aim of course is to ensure that the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner and in accordance with the approved policies of the department of education (DoE, 2001)**.**

The SMT is expected to be in touch with the core responsibilities and functions given to them. These, according to EEA 1998 include teaching, extra-curricular activities, personnel management, administration, and interaction with stakeholders. The SMT members are expected to work collaboratively, ensuring that all learners benefit from the education system. According to the Handbook for school management teams 2009, these functions should be well coordinated with the three portfolio committees, namely, school development, educators support and learner support of the institution level support team (ILST) to be established in schools (DoE, 2001).

Two rationales drew the researcher to this study. These derive from policy and professional experiences. First, the researcher works for the Department of Education which has initiated and

adopted the policy of inclusive education as the philosophy to inform all service provision. Second, in the researcher's capacity as Education Specialist, the researcher works with schools, facilitating and supporting the implementation of this policy and in the course of executing her duties the researcher became curious to understand how school management was interacting with the policy, particularly what they view as critical in transforming their schools into inclusive centres of learning.

The researcher's view is that the creation of meaningful support structures responsible for all learners rests upon the shoulders of the SMT. As such; it needs to be able to consider the context of the school in addressing the needs of individual learners so as to offer relevant and effective guidance and support. If the SMT can really work together in managing their schools, they would be able to address the needs of all learners as entrenched in the Bill of Rights.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The political transformation that has taken place in South Africa has permeated all legislation and policies across the board. In the same vein, inclusive education is a paradigm shift (Naicker, 2000) in terms of how education is provided and supported in South Africa. Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, (2005) highlights that transformation efforts are not possible without a radical shift from one set of assumptions, beliefs, values, norms, relationships, behaviours and practices to another, based on values of mutual acceptance, respect for diversity, a sense of belonging and social justice. As such it is important to understand inclusive education against the background of historical antecedents that influenced policies after the apartheid regime.

The researcher has already stated that in the past the majority of learners could not access quality education and that special needs provisioning only benefited the minority. The theoretical framework that informed separate education facilities for children with and without special needs was designed and focused on the medical model of disability (Naicker, 2000). Medical model regards disability as a defect or sickness which must be cured through medical intervention (Naicker, 2000). Inclusive education policy demands a paradigm shift in how we do the education business because of the way it prioritises support to meet the needs and maximize

potential of all learners. It embraces concepts like barriers to learning and development instead of special needs, prefers learning support to remedial education and focuses on system changes rather than changes within the individual, and these are the concepts that will be applied in this dissertation. The changes in terminology go with the shift from medical model to a rights based model of support (DoE, 2001).

The study used the ecosytemic perspective as a blend of ecological and systems theories which view human interactions between individuals and between different levels of the social context (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). The ecosystemic theory is the most relevant for this study because it highlights the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For the purposes of my study, it is important to understand the school as a system with multi layers of sub-systems. These layers are the individual learner, teachers, the school management team, the whole school, the community and society where the learner comes from. These are multiple systems that are connected to the individual learner from an ecological systems' perspective.

The researcher understands that the school system is part of a bigger system with different layers and levels of operation and uses Urie Brofenbrenner's ecosystemic approach to understand the concept of inclusion in the school context. In this study the ecosystemic theory was employed in explaining the operations of the SMT as one layer of many in the school system, involved in changing the culture of the school. The ecosystems theory was also useful in highlighting how individual people and groups at different levels of social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationships (Donald, et al, 2002).

The first level of ecosysytems theory is microsystem where a learner interacts with peers, the curriculum content, teaching and learning materials, assessment, learning and challenges (Pauqette & Ryan, 2001). This could be defined as the first inner layer of the education system. The microsystem influences the mesosystem which in this case includes the SMT and the institution level support team (ILST) as the two structures that work together in promoting inclusive education. The latter two structures are inundated with the responsibility of addressing

and responding to the needs and demands of the microsystem. The school becomes a macrosystem that is responsible for making sure that all layers work together in re-culturing the ethos of the school. All these systems have roles, norms and rules that can powerfully shape the development of the school for it to be inclusive.

Landsberg, et al (2005) found that in the field of inclusive education, Brofenbrenner's ecological model has much relevance in emphasizing the interaction between an individual's development and the systems within the social context.

1.4 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Considering what the department of education expects from the SMT, it is important to bear in mind that there are aspects that should form the cornerstone of their operation. SMTs are expected to develop school policies that talk to government policies on how schools should be managed. Since the SMT collaborates with other stakeholders, planning becomes very crucial for these policies to be properly implemented. As indicated in EWP 6 (DoE, 2001), the policy brings about systemic changes that prioritise supporting all learners.

The objectives of the study were as follows:
- ✓ To understand the SMTs understanding of inclusive education
- ✓ To establish what SMTs consider as important in ensuring that their schools are inclusive?
- ✓ To identify the challenges that they face in making their schools inclusive.

The transformation from exclusionary to inclusionary practice in education impacts on how schools are run and managed. The SMTs are key role players in making sure that the schools system is inclusive and, as a result, educators are largely influenced by the way the SMT operates in outlining the vision and policies of the school.

The study focuses on the SMT because although collaborative effort and the involvement of all stakeholders is vital in developing inclusive schools, it is the SMT that sets the tone / ethos in

schools. It is important that the SMT becomes clear about what they expect from other stakeholders and role players in addressing the vision of the school. In inclusive schools there are changes in leadership and management in response to the challenges that they are faced with. The involvement of all stakeholders ensures that all learners are respected for their diversity and ability within a culture and ethos of support.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach located in the interpretive tradition was used in this study. Within this qualitative research method the researcher described and interpreted the participants' feelings and experiences in human terms (Terre Blanche, Durrhein & Painter, 2006). Qualitative research methodology enabled the researcher to use the case study as a systematic enquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest (Maree, 2007).

The sample consisted of one primary school called Dadada, located in a rural context. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheinm & Painter (2006), case studies are intensive investigations of particular individuals. The case study enabled the researcher to get rich data. In this case study research process, the researcher strived to understand how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon that is investigated (Henning, 2005). The aim was to gain insight and understanding of the critical considerations that make a school to be inclusive.

In the selection of the participants the researcher used non probability method in the form of purposive sampling (Maree, 2007). All five SMT members of Dadada school were involved in the study (one principal, deputy principal and 3 HODs). The researcher used focus group interview as a data collecting technique. According to Mouton (2004), the instrument (focus group interview) ensures consistency where more than one participant is responding. The focus group interview was used with SMT members as they have a common group membership as the management team members of the school.

Critical research questions:
- ✓ How is inclusive education understood by the SMT?
- ✓ What considerations do SMTs need to embark on to ensure that the schools become inclusive?
- ✓ What challenges do they encounter in transforming the school to become inclusive?

Data that was obtained from fieldwork culminated into sets of data organized in themes (Mouton, 2004). The data was analysed using research questions as frames in terms of the themes emerging during research process. The thinking patterns of the participants were interpreted by the researcher with the aim of identifying and organizing logic and therefore getting the main themes (Henning, 2005). All the themes were organised based on the research questions that the researcher used as a guide informing data analysis.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in unearthing management perspectives of what is critical in transforming schools in accordance with inclusive education principles. Research done this far has concentrated on teacher attitudes towards inclusive education (Forlin, 2004) and not much has been done to highlight the role of school management teams in promoting and supporting innovations. This study contributes to the body of research that interrogates the process of implementing inclusive education and the challenges thereof, and it has local significance.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

Creswell (1994) cautions that sole data collectors and analysts should be wary of biases or assumptions that may influence data collection and analysis and, as a departmental official, I could have approached the study with preconceived ideas. It was also a limitation that the researcher is a departmental official that works with the Ward where this school is located as this tipped the power scales. This was addressed by providing a clear explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study. The fact that the researcher has a good relationship with the school helped.

Another contextual limitation that came up is that the school felt intimidated by the research process because it dealt with a policy that was released in 2001 and which should be implemented.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All ethical considerations were taken care of. Ethical clearance was received from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Office and the Department of Education also issued permission to conduct the study (Appendix A). In addition, the Ward manager and the principal as gate keepers were approached for permission which they granted. To protect the identities of the participating school and its management team, pseudonyms have been used in this report.

1.9 ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One has introduced the study by unpacking the topic and clarifying aspects involved in the study. The purpose of the study has been outlined, the theoretical frameworks highlighted and the research process tabled.

Chapter Two reviews the related literature from research done in the past as well as various policy documents and some suggestions to the implementation of inclusive education. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks influencing the study are discussed.

Chapter Three tables the research design and methodologies, the research context and process, ethical considerations as well as the limitations that the study had.

Chapter Four presents, analyses, discusses and interprets data gathered through the choice qualitative methodology.

Chapter Five concludes the study, summarises and makes recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature on inclusive education with the intention to understand the South African context within which it developed, what is meant by inclusive education, why this particular type of education has been adopted, what research has been done around this kind of education and what still needs to be addressed. To that effect, research, policies, legislations and government gazettes published locally and internationally will be discussed.

2.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENTS LEADING TO THE ADOPTION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The inclusive education movement started internationally but the principles guiding it were soon embraced by developing contexts as well.

2.2.1 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The World Conference on Education for All that took place in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 included discussions on inclusive education. That conference made it possible for the World Conference on Special Education to declare inclusion as a right so that even learners with special needs are able to access the regular school system (UNESCO, 1994). The inclusion of learners with barriers to learning and development in ordinary schools and classrooms as part of a global human rights initiative was on the agenda that influenced other countries' governments to seriously adopt the policy of inclusive education.

Forlin (2004) states that inclusive education was adopted by many other countries in the world and that most developing countries have embraced it as a solution to the inequalities that exist in special education provisioning. The meaning of inclusion is culturally determined and essentially depends on the political value and processes of the state (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw, 2000). This means that it is important to consider the context of each country

and community in identifying and addressing barriers that exist in different systems. This statement indicates that inclusion is a commitment to how everybody wants the world to be. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) a promise of inclusion signifies that disabled persons, whatever the origin, nature or seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and as full as possible. However conventions and other formal statements of intent on their own are not enough to ensure that the right to education is realised in practice.

It is limiting to think of education in terms of basic numeracy and literacy only, because preparing people for lifelong learning and civic participation is the end goal. It seems that policies of education provision had created some of the most severe problems in many countries by not extending education to other life skills and not just numeracy and literacy. This statement agrees with Clark, Dyson, Millward & Robson (2009) who argues that inclusion is not about grand policies and discourse but the reality of inclusion is where a school or an individual tries to do the best in developing individuals in a holistic manner. Senegal (2005), cautions that inclusive education has become an international buzz word and has been adopted in the rhetoric of many countries across the globe.

In defining inclusive education, Booth et al, (2000) see it as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. Similarly, UNESCO (2001) defined inclusion as a developmental approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion.

Many declarations have legitimated the idea of inclusion including the EWP 6 (DoE, 2001) as it is about maximizing the participation of all learners in the culture and curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning. EWP 6 is very much in line with the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1999). The UN Conventions on the Rights of People with

Disabilities, Article 24 highlights the education right of people with disabilities (UNESCO, 2006). South Africa did endorse the above mentioned policy mandates even though policies are mostly presented without proper preparations for people who are expected to implement them.

2.2.2 SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENTS

Before 1994, South Africa had 18 different and unequally funded education departments which were racially and demographically defined (Clark, et al, 2009). This arrangement favoured white people and deprived others, especially vulnerable groups, because of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, culture or language (RSA, 1996). It was thus imperative for the new government and the new Minister of Education to create a unitary system to provide quality education for all learners including the provisioning of special education services in black communities.

In 1997 the Ministry of Education released Education White Paper on Education and Training for the purpose of addressing past imbalances, and to promote equality of access and non-discrimination (DoE, 1997). This document highlighted the inequality problems in the curriculum, teaching materials, teaching and learning and teacher education and sought to address them. This was followed by the South African Constitution; Act 108 of 1996 which entrenched everyone's right to basic education which the state through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible to all (RSA, 1996). Immediately education was transformed from a privilege given to a select few to a right. In the same year the South African Schools Act (SASA) was passed which introduced compulsory education for all learners between 6 and 15 years of age (DoE, 1996).

At the same time, the Minister of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to investigate and make recommendations on aspects of special needs education and support services (DoE, 1997). The joint report of the commission and committee highlighted a number of barriers that existed in the education system, some within the learners and also in the broader socio-political context and recommended that an inclusive education and

training system would be able to address those barriers. Some of the barriers identified include the impact of HIV/AIDS, negative attitudes, inflexible curriculum, language and communication, inaccessible and unsafe built environment, lack of parental recognition, disability, and lack of access to basic services, poverty, socio-emotional problem, and factors that place children at risk (DoE, 2001).

2.2.2.1 BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In South Africa, inclusive education is about identifying and minimising barriers to learning and development as indicated in EWP 6, (DoE, 2001) which is more than the education of students with disabilities. The concept of barriers to learning and development replaces the concept "special educational needs" as defined in the EWP 6 policy document. Booth et al, (2000) highlight that it is important to address and limit these barriers because they can prevent access to school or limit participation within the school.

It is the researcher's opinion that in addressing these barriers it is important for the school management teams to consider the person who is experiencing these barriers, the type of barrier experienced and how to minimize that barrier. Planning for support will require the availability of material resources within the school and the strategy of mobilizing additional specialized resources from outside the school setting. The resources that are required to reduce barriers can be found within the school or in the community and local structures. The problem is often that, as Ntombela (2010) highlights, most educators have had very limited experience of the policy statement in terms of information, training and/or support in preparation for the development of an inclusive system of education. As a result many teachers have limited understandings and knowledge of barriers and how to address them (Ntombela, 2010).

These barriers to learning and development can be grouped as systemic, societal, pedagogical and intrinsic. These barriers are discussed below:

(a) Systemic barriers

This refers to barriers within the system of education. For example, shortages in classrooms result in overcrowding which negatively impacts the quality of teaching and learning. Some schools are overcrowded because the SMT is unable to deploy staff appropriately as school are given educators according to the post provisioning norm that considers the number of learners (Landsberg, et al, 2005). There are schools that have dilapidated classrooms which are supposed to be renovated or rebuilt. This becomes a de- motivating factor to learners who are supposed to be accommodated in conducive environments for effective teaching and learning. Specialised rooms like libraries, computer rooms are also important in maximizing learners' participation in learning. Schools are responsible for implementing a number of policies that exist in the country but the biggest challenge is on the implementation. Another example is the curriculum that has become a barrier in the system because of the changes that come with it.

Other systemic barriers according to EWP 6 (DoE, 2001) are inaccessible environments for learners and staff with physical challenges. It is expected that learners with physical challenges access mainstreams schools in instances where they only require physical adaptations. This move becomes a challenge because of inappropriate communication impacting negatively on school development. Adaptation of the physical infrastructure is always perceived as an expensive initiative and thus depriving learners and other community members with physical disabilities.

Another barrier is inappropriate and inadequate support services from the district offices. This is caused mainly by understaffing in areas where district staff members have many schools (Ntombela, 2010). One of the job descriptions and responsibilities of the SMT is curriculum management and administration. Curriculum support to educators becomes a huge barrier if the SMT members themselves are not confident enough in supporting teachers. That is why it is important that SMT members get continuous intensive curriculum support from the district officials in terms of curriculum management as well. This signifies a need for continuous professional development for education managers and educators in addressing the problem of curriculum development and effective implementation.

One systemic barrier that is still very prevalent in the country is the issue of negative attitudes and stereotypes whereby it is still believed that learners with disabilities should be kept at home or schooled in separate institutions (DoE, 2001). The researcher believes that the stereotypes in the community deprive even those with emotional and psycho-social problems the platform to get support in confidential settings. These negative attitudes and stereotypes also deprive learners and people with disabilities the opportunity of acquiring basic skills so that they can be independent. Shortage of skills and specifically the specialist staff who can be able to train educators in the administration of diagnostic assessment to identify learners and plan for support is also a problem.

(b) Societal barriers.

Within societies there are many other challenges that learners are exposed to. Kvalsvig, Chhagan & Taylor (2007) in their report indicate that poverty is also a consequence of elevated levels of HIV/AIDS in some communities. The number of learners who are orphaned in schools increases every year. Illness and death of young breadwinners in a family impact on the income available for the support of children. Schools have to deal with these crucial issues on a daily basis in making sure that affected learners are not excluded from the education system. The researcher has observed that learners in schools are also heading families and yet they are in schools and have to cope with school work and be responsible for other siblings in their home. Poverty and unemployment is also as a result of the economic climate change that affects us all in one way or the other.

Schools are centres of teaching and learning but this becomes ineffective if the other psychosocial issues are not acknowledged so that support is offered to affected learners. The researcher has observed that many challenges that are found in schools are sometimes influenced by what is happening in society. These include sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect of children sometimes by their parents and close family members (Engelbrecht, 2006). Bullying amongst learners themselves can also be associated with the kind of behaviour that adults display in front of children. The abuse of alcohol by adults sometimes makes them to behave in unacceptable ways, for example, the use of vulgar language. All these are societal barriers that

directly and indirectly influence the behaviour of learners and have potential to interfere with learning.

Late admissions of learners who come from the streets and those that were herding cattle in rural areas demand that communities work together with schools in making sure that out of schools children and youth are brought to school as advocated by EWP 6 (DoE, 2001). These societal barriers force managers of schools to develop strategies and plans to draw in parents so that they work together in developing inclusive schools.

(c) Pedagogical (teaching and learning) barriers.

These include inappropriate teaching and assessment methods that take place in the classroom environment during the process of curriculum delivery. In some cases the problem is caused by lack of content knowledge, curriculum adaptation and multi-level teaching skills that are not there on the side of the teachers. The researcher has observed that the National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002) is still a challenge to educators because of different reasons. One of the reasons is that educators need more skills in implementing it especially when they need to plan for learners with diverse needs and those who are experiencing barriers to learning and development. National Education Policy Act (NEPA), (DoE, 1998b) specifies that SMT members should also take a certain percentage of workload in classroom teaching. This can help them to be able to support educators with the curriculum that they are familiar with.

The language of instruction which is often English is problematic in many ways especially to those who are second language speakers. The majority of the schools in the province have learners who are not English speaking and there English become a language and communication barrier. Sefa Dei & Asgharzadeh, (2003) argue that in instances where learners are taught in another language, the environment is viewed as unfriendly, resulting in feelings of helplessness and a lack of self pride because their mother tongue is devalued. Language differences and difficulties require classroom organisation, management, and time available to complete the programme to be flexibility in terms of curriculum delivery. Language diversity requires educators to plan for curriculum adaptations in accommodating all learners (DoE, 2001).

Unavailability of relevant teaching and learning support materials and equipment becomes a huge barrier as the curriculum approach which is outcomes-based needs resources to be available for effective teaching and learning. It is difficult for educators to understand and incorporate principles like designing down, social justice, healthy environment and inclusivity as they underpin the curriculum. These relevant teaching and learning support materials should be planned for by the SMT and made available to teachers for effective teaching and learning. It is crucial that the training of teachers and SMT members starts supporting teachers in their learning, so that they can gain the skills and confidence to address a diversity of educational needs in their classrooms (Rose, 2001).

Naicker, (2000), argues that inclusive education highlights the importance of pedagogy and curriculum because in the process of curriculum implementation there may be numerous learners who are excluded. If learners fail to meet the requirements of a given curriculum, differences in learning arise and the majority of learners drop out of the system. In that case the curriculum itself becomes a barrier to learning. Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton (2006) agree with the above when they say that inclusion refers to a set of principles, values and practices which involve effective curriculum delivery. It doesn't matter what the learners' barriers are but what is important is to be given opportunities to learn and achieve at one's potential level.

One of the most important aspects that should be considered by the SMT is the area of educator development and the entire field of human resource development. The restructuring of the education system has been a great challenge to educators especially in the field of curriculum development. The training and development of educators cannot be considered to the exclusion of broader concerns relating to the barriers that we are faced with in this country. Recent discussion with the National Department of Education highlighted the critical role of higher education institutions in educator development (Balfour, Buthelezi & Mitchell, 2004). Teachers need thorough pre-service and in-service training and understanding of inclusive education to understand the objectives of the curriculum. It is crucial for educators to be trained on different learning styles and multiple intelligences. If educators have understanding of their own different

learning styles, it will be easier for them to understand that learners also learn differently. Brodin & Lindstrand (2007), give teaching tips for educators which include that educators must show that they care for their learners, being sensitive to learners and focus on learners' skills not grades because education is about developing learners' skills as well.

(d) Intrinsic barriers.

These are barriers that exist within a learner and that include neurological, physical, sensory, and cognitive disorders. Medical, physical, psychological and sensory problems retard the progress of a learner if early identification and support does not take place. Schools need to be aware of the Health department networks and resources around the area as this would make it easy for schools to refer learners with medical conditions. Kvalsvig, et al (2007), argue that the effects of HIV/AIDS may be considered as one of the chronic diseases and disabilities. It becomes a big challenge for the SMT to plan and network with NGOs and other government departments so that affected and infected learners get support. The Department of Home Affairs also plays a crucial role in making sure that the required documents are made available to learners. This enables those learners who are legible for social grants to apply.

There are learners who have chronic illness like epilepsy, asthma, TB and other diseases that require medication. Good educators are able to support these learners and when they are attending doctors, additional support is provided (DoE, 2001). Other learners have disabilities or handicaps and some are accommodated in special schools whilst the majority of them is in special schools. In late 1990s, the term special educational needs was used for ethnic minorities or socially disadvantaged pupils (DoE, 1997). This term mainly refers to learners with communication disorder, motor skills disorders, sensory disorders, learning disorders, mental retardation, behaviour disorders and those with chronic disorders as well.

2.3 DEFINITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

It was the NCSNET/NCESS report (DoE, 1997) that informed the final policy document on inclusive education, namely the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system launched in 2001 (DoE, 2001). The adoption of

Education White Paper 6 concretised the first democratically elected government's commitment to equalising opportunities and providing quality education as it engaged in the creation of "a just and equitable system" of education (Ntombela, 2006: 54). EWP 6 (DoE, 2001) promotes an education system governed by principles of equality, non-discrimination, and accessibility. Such an education system challenges attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and environments so that the diverse needs of all learners are met. It also addresses or responds to, a number of barriers that were reported by the NCSNET and NCESS in their report.

Inclusive education is more than just addressing issues of disability but is also concerned with transforming the whole system such that it becomes more accommodating of differences that learners bring to the learning environment (DoE, 2001). This concept of inclusive education has been ambiguous to many people in terms of the way it was interpreted. People thought that it was about taking learner with disabilities to mainstream schools. A paradigm shift in practice became crucial in moving away from saying it is a learner who has a disability to saying the system needs to be accommodative to meet the needs of learners. The shift called for moving away from the medical model of practice to a process of responding to the needs of all learners in the education system (Fulcher, 1989). The above discussion explaining all the barriers to learning and development that are found in the system is evidence to this. Naicker, (2000) supported the above and mentioned that the theoretical framework within which separate education facilities for children with special needs were designed prior to inclusive education policy, focused on the medical model of disability**.**

The public school system in the country is faced with a responsibility of responding to all barriers to offer quality education to all learners. Such an education system concerns itself with the identification and minimizing barriers to learning and development and maximizing participation, support and resources. In South Africa inclusive education has not been promoted as an add-on option for education but as an educational strategy that can contribute to the development of a democratic and just society (DoE, 2001). After the end of the Apartheid era the new democratic government committed itself to the transformation of education. This was followed by the generation of key policy documents and legislation that stress the principle of

education as a basic human right as enshrined in the Constitution. The policy of inclusive education is one of those generated with the intention to transform educational provision.

In its broadest and all-encompassing meaning, inclusive education is an approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all learners, young and old, including those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion (DoE, 2001). It implies all learners, including young people, with or without disabilities, can learn together through access to common pre-school provisions, schools and community educational setting. This is possible with an appropriate network of support services. According to Ntombela (2006) inclusive education also seeks to create an interdependent society where differences are accommodated, accepted and celebrated.

Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream school for pupils who have previously been excluded but also about providing support to all schools. The study conducted on the progress of inclusive education in South Africa (Ntombela, 2010) indicate that teachers are feeling overwhelmed by the demands some learners make on them and feel that separate provision would provide relief. This response indicates clearly that closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision and placing those learners in an unchanged mainstream system will be equivalent to "dumping".

To realize the goals of inclusive education, EWP 6 (DoE, 2001) suggests the development of three types of schools to increase access to education for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. The three different types of schools introduced by the inclusive education system are discussed below. The aim of the three types of schools is to have different support provisioning offered at three levels so that learners with different needs are provided appropriately (DoE, 2001).

(a) Special schools

Special schools will no longer operating in a racially segregated manner and are meant to provide critical education services to learners who require intense and high levels of support (DoE, 2001). Special schools will also play a role of resource centers in providing expertise and support in areas like curriculum, assessment and instruction. Provision of comprehensive

education programmes that provide life skills training and programme-to-work linkages will be included. Presently special schools are also undergoing the process of development in many areas. They have non teaching staff, teacher assistants, school nurses, psychologists and therapists based at school more than just having educators. These schools do have special rooms like therapists' rooms and other special rooms where learners can be supported.

(b)   Full service schools

Full services schools are mainstream schools that will be identified throughout the country and converted to provide support for the full range of learning needs among all learners. The additional supports that will be given to full service schools include financial, physical infrastructure, human, material resources and professional development (DoE, 2001). At the present moment the researcher has observed that there are two teacher assistants employed at each full service school (FSS). According to Forlin (2004), teacher assistant's role is to assist an educator so that teaching can focus on teaching rather than on administration tasks associated with teaching.

(c)   Ordinary mainstream school

Ordinary schools will continue to accommodate low level support needs of learners. Existing school systems in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations and styles, leadership roles will have to change in these schools. This is because inclusive education is about the participation of ALL children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice (Winkler, Modise & Dawber, 2004).

SMT members in all schools should be supported and developed by the District based support team (DBST) (DoE, 2001) so that they are able to manage diverse needs, offering low levels of support. UNESCO (2004) agrees with this stating that inclusive education means that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic

or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (Swart & Pettipher, 2001).

2.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is true that there are many changes that were introduced in the education system in the last 17 years. The implementation of EWP6 in South Africa has not been easy, in the same way like other policies introduced in the system. It is indicated in the EWP 6 policy document that it will take 20 years to fully implement the policy based on the short, medium and long term plan specified (DoE, 2001). The intentions of this policy is good in terms of increasing access to education for all learners as the South African Schools Act (SASA) (DoE, 1996) indicates that it is the learners basic constitutional right. This mandate requires a paradigm shift in how education is understood, how schools are managed and how support services are provided.

The national department of education conducted the first inclusive education pilot programme in South Africa (DoE, 2003) in three provinces, namely, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and North West after a series of advocacy campaigns on inclusive education across the country. The aim of the advocacy campaigns was to raise awareness to all the stakeholders involved and interested in the implementation of inclusive education. This pilot study was funded by the Danish government (DANIDA) and it was entitled, Resource and Training Programme for Educator Development (DoE, 2003). The field testing looked at special schools to be converted to resource centres and 30 mainstream schools to be converted to full service schools. This study indicated ten broad areas and the one that is relevant to this study is management and leadership. The other aspects were advocacy, training of educators and all officials involved, infrastructure development, establishment of structures (ILST) and DBST, provisioning of support staff, and others. The recommendation on management and leadership related to the challenges of ensuring that a critical mass of people are equipped to provide the direction and leadership required to implement inclusive education across the country. It also recommended that effective management to support the implementation process be developed at all levels of implementation (DoE, 2003).

Inclusive education in South Africa has not been introduced as another option for education but as an educational strategy that can contribute to democratic and inclusive society (DoE, 2001). One of the commitments of the new democratic government after the end of the apartheid era was the transformation of education and policies that are key in emphasizing the principle of education as a basic human right as enshrined in the constitution of the country. It is very important to consider the complex contextual influences that continuously affect education transformation. The very important one in the implementation of inclusive education is the move from conceptualizing special needs within an individual deficits approach to needs, to a human rights approach within the social context in which life is lived out (Engelbrecht, 2006).

The multifaceted societal changes, encompassing educational reforms and contextual changes, including the management of diversity in schools, have had a negative impact on the implementation of inclusive education (Engelbrecht, 2004). This is due to many factors including the role of unions, SGBs and school management interests. Enhancing the recognition and acceptance of the basic rights of all South African children to be accommodated in inclusive school communities therefore remains a challenge. All over the country schools are being asked to include learners with experiencing barriers to learning and development in mainstream general classes. This means that learners who find learning difficult will be in the same classes as those who find it much easier to succeed at school (Winkler, et al, 2004).

Children who needed special resources, adaptations to the curriculum or different assessment strategies to aid them with their learning were often referred to as 'learners with special education needs' (DoE, 2001). These children were tested by school psychologists and depending upon their Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score, they received instruction either in a 'special or adaptation class' at a mainstream school or at special schools. This led to the 'labeling', categorizing and stigmatizing of young children, which had an adverse effect on their self esteem and self worth (DoE, 2001). Some learners are still excluded and disengaged in the learning process despite the fact that EWP 6 (DoE, 2001) mentions that in mainstream education priority will include multi-level classroom instruction and co-operative learning so that educators can prepare main lessons with variations that respond to individual learner needs. The reality of the matter is that learners

who experience problems in reading, writing and spelling are excluded because they are not engaged in learning (Swart & Pettipher, 2001). Engelbrecht, (2006) also supports the above and reinforces that in order to increase the capacity of schools to support the participation and learning of an increasingly diverse range of learners, contextual influences that bear on the way in which individual schools function must be analysed and understood by the academics who are involved in collaborative inquiry.

In South Africa the above movement was also supported by a number of policies and legislations that led to Inclusive Education policy (DoE, 2001) which emphasizes the notion of addressing and minimizing barriers to learning and development. The emphasis in inclusive education is on all children can learn approach so as to maximize the individual learners' potential. This approach is also based on the levels of support required in addressing the needs of learners with the belief and understanding that given relevant and sufficient support all learners can achieve (Winkler, Modise & Dawber, 2004).

2.5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SMT IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The SMT is a group of educators promoted to management positions for the purpose of working together in managing the school. SMT members include the principal who is the head of the school, deputy principal and head of the phase or department at school. The job of the principal according to Employment of Educators Act (EEA), (DoE, 1998a) is to ensure that the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation, regulation and personnel administration measures as prescribed. This document agrees with Bush, (2007) where he says, schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners. Another aim of course is to ensure that the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner and in accordance with the approved policies of the department of education.

The SMT is the only structure that aims at giving the deputy principal the responsibility of assisting the principal and maintaining the awareness of the administrative procedure across the total range of school activities and functions. The head of department, responsible for subject or

phase at school level is responsible for the effective functioning of the department and organises relevant and related extra-curricular activities so as to ensure that the subject, learning area or phase and the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner (DoE, 1998a). Ainscow, (1999) highlights that schools that move successfully towards more inclusive ways of working provide evidence of what is currently seen as a shift in thinking about leadership. That is why the SMT becomes responsible for duties that include teaching, extra-curricular, personnel management, administrative, interaction with stakeholders and communication. The SMT members are expected to work in a collaborative effort in ensuring that the above responsibilities are done for the benefit of all learners. Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, (1999), talk about participative leadership which assumes that the decision making process of the group ought to be the group's and not an individual's.

According to the Handbook for schools management teams (DoE, 2009), these functions should be well coordinated with the three portfolio committees, namely, school development, educators support and learner support of the institution level support team (ILST) to be established in schools. The responsibility of this structure is not supported by Bush, (2003) who argues that managers and leaders of schools must be able to develop and implement a process that involves goal setting, needs identification, priority-setting, planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation. The researcher would like to highlight that the absence of the concept of vision in the above process makes it differ from the ILST roles and responsibilities which include the development of a vision and a mission statement of a school.

There are specific responsibilities of the SMT members that are prescribed in the NEPA, DoE, (1998b) document. These responsibilities are discussed below:

2.5.1 General administrative role

The professional management of the school and the process of giving proper instructions and guidelines is joint responsibility of the SMT. The above implies that the management members should be able to plan, organize, command, coordinate and control everything that is taking place at school (Southworth, 2002). Proper management of the finances and school infrastructure is

also important and falls under the core duties and functions of the SMT members. They need to monitor the school funds working with the school governing body (SGB). The maintenance and acquisition of the school premises and furniture is part of the critical responsibilities under school development. Since the SMT is the team that works collaboratively sharing the responsibility, they together ensure that the incoming and outgoing correspondence, circulars and information is made available to all the staff members. Bush & Heystek, (2006), also highlight that the administrative role of the SMT is to assist the office administration staff with financial aspects such as budgeting.

2.5.2   Personnel

It is the responsibility of the SMT to ensure the professional leadership within the school by guiding, supervising and offering advice on the work performance of all staff in the school. The equitable distribution and deployment of all staff members as well as the educator appraisal process is important. The SMT should ensure that educator development is included in the school plans and that includes non-teaching staff for effective service delivery. If the principal and educators do not own innovations but are simply required to implement externally imposed changes, they are likely to do without enthusiasm, leading to possible failure (Bush, 2003). Support and professional development of staff becomes crucial as Ainscow, (2001) highlights that leaders should recognise school growth hinges on the capacity of colleagues to develop.

2.5.3   Teaching

All SMT members that is the principal, deputy principal and the HOD (subject learning area or phase) are expected to engage in class teaching as per workload and can be class educators if required (DoE, 1998). They are also expected to record the attainment of learners taught. It is believed that if the school managers are involved in teaching they will be able to assist other staff members with issues regarding to teaching and learning. This practice contradicts with researchers like Bush, (2007) who argues that SMT interacts with the teaching staff to formulate schedules for all classes, determining the required resources and helps in designing the methods of assessing learners' performance.

2.5.4 Extra and co-curricular programs

DoE, (1998) highlights that the SMT should play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in the school and to plan major school functions and to encourage learners to participate in sports, educational and cultural activities organised by community bodies. Their involvement in recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees as require falls within the ambit of the SMT. The above is part of the administrative duties of the SMT according to Bush, (2007) as he also emphasised that the policies guiding the above mentioned processes is underpinned in the school values and vision.

The members of the SMT should work together in taking charge of the subjects, learning are or phase as specified by the departmental policies, in the case, the National curriculum statement (DoE, 2002). The SMT is responsible for the provision and coordination of guidance with regards to the latest ideas on teaching approaches to the subject, methods, techniques, evaluation and teaching and learning aids. The curriculum implementation has different levels of plan and it is the responsibility of the SMT to support other staff members in ensuring the educational welfare of learners in the department. The control and administration of the process of recording and reporting of the learners' achievement should be ensured by the SMT that it always on the right track as Leithwood, et al, (1999) conceptualized transformational leadership along the dimension of modelling best practice and demonstrating high performance expectations.

2.5.5 Interaction with stakeholders

It is compulsory for the principal especially to serve on the governing body of the school and render all necessary assistance to the governing body in the performance of their functions in terms of the SASA, (DoE, 1996). The other members of the SMT should participate in community activities in connection with educational matters and community building. If the school has a deputy principal, he or she is responsible to supervise and advise the representative council of learners (RCL) as the structure that represents learners in high schools only. It is the responsibility of the SMT to make sure that they network and involve other stakeholders if taking care of the school development, educator and learner support. Ainscow, (1999) argues that academic success of learners will be ensure by the involvement of parents in the process of

education as it helps in different ways including collecting feedback from parents about any concerns they or their children have regarding school policies.

2.5.6   Communication

Communication within the school in the form of internal circulars and memo come from the office. It is the core function of the SMT to liaise with the staff members, ward, circuit, district offices and other stakeholders in writing. If the SMT can really work together in managing their schools, they would automatically be able to address the needs of all learners as it is expected in the constitution of the country, Bill of rights. Considering the responsibility of the SMT, it is crucial for them to communicate the plan for supporting involved in the development of a school. The researcher's view is that the support for all learners rests upon the shoulders of the SMT and that if all SMT responsibilities are fulfilled, schools will become inclusive.

For schools to be able to create inclusive learning environment, effective leadership is one of the critical aspects. These above aspects of the responsibilities of the SMTs give guidelines to that effect so that schools are managed effectively and inclusively. This is considered as the strategic element within the broader leadership paradigm. Giorcelli (2006) presented a paper based on the critical factors in improving low performing school. In her presentation she lists eleven (11) key factors that make a school to be inclusive. One of the aspects relevant to the research is effective leadership. The researcher also believes that in building inclusive schools what is needed are, professional leaders who will be able to minimize low performance by including learners, developing staff, and collaborating with parents, thus promoting inclusion.

2.7 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

The study used the ecosystemic theory in an attempt to understand critical considerations for school management in ensuring that their schools are inclusive. The ecosystems theory focuses on the interaction of the school, family and the society all of which contribute to the development of a child. This theory according to Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, (2002) is based on the interaction and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment. A school as a system interacts with other systems and each system has different layers that are

interrelated. In schools, there is SMT, SGB, educators and learners who cannot be divorced from families, communities and other stakeholders. Paquettes & Ryan, (2001) also highlight that ecological systems theory considers child development within the context of relationships that form his or her environment.

The medical model has been criticized and replaced by the support-based model which led us to a more social and ecological theoretical model (Landsberg, et al 2005). This ecological theoretical model considers all the barriers that the researcher has referred to in the study. The education system is facing a major challenge in understanding the complexity of the influence, interaction and interrelationships between individuals as well as the school systems that are connected to a learner from an ecological systems theory or what can be called change perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In order for me to understand how the different systems that interact and are interrelated to the school, the researcher will make use of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic model as a multidimensional model of human development.

Ecosystemic theory is the most relevant theory because it is based on the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment. For the purposes of my study, it is important to understand the school as a system with multi layers of sub-systems. These layers are the individual learner, the family, the school management team, the whole school, the community and society where the learner comes from. These are multiple systems that are directly or indirectly connected to the individual learner from an ecological systems theory or systems of change perspective (Donald, et al, 2002). In the process of investigating the critical aspect for the school management team in promoting inclusive schools, it is important to consider the connection within which a learner finds himself or herself. The ecosystemic perspective will indicate how individual people and groups at different levels of the social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationships (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010) affecting a learner in the school system.

The participation and social interaction of the society, family school, school management teams, individual learners, teachers and the entire school contribute to the promotion of an inclusive

school. Donald, et al. (2010) talks about a complex but powerful ecosystemic model of different levels of system involved in the process of child development. These systems have layers and levels of interacting systems resulting in change, growth and development such as physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural (Landsberg et al. 2005). These systems are micro-system, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Huitt, (2009) identifies the immediate level of the ecology or context of human development as the one which has the earliest influence in the child's life. The micro-system is the immediate system to a child in terms of the influence and being influenced by the family, peers, religion, neighbourhood and the school. The family system moulds and shapes the child in the manner that will make him or her interacts and relate with the peers. This is the second level of the environmental system, which is meso-system where one component of the system interrelates and influences the other. Landsberg, et al. (2005), defines meso-system as a system of micro-systems as referring to the interaction and development that exist between the families where the children come from. The school is expected to support, minimize and address the barriers that the child might be presenting. The process of the meso-system is possible in an inclusive environment where the culture and ethos of the school is supportive and the school-family partnership does take place.

The exo-system layer defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly (Paquette & Ryn, 2001). This structure is not close to a learner as such but it is a layer that impacts the child's development as he or she interacts with other structures. One typical example is when a learner's parent gets retrenched at work place; he or she feels the negative pain as a result of lack of income in the household. Same as when the parents are sick and the child has to deal with such circumstances which indirectly impact on his or her school functioning.

The macrosystem layer may be considered as the outermost layer in the child's environment (Paquette & Ryn, 2001). This layer includes cultural values, customs depending on the area and cultural belief systems as well as laws of the community as prescribed by the government of the

day in the case of South Africa as a country. Donald, et al, (2002), also highlights that this system has an influence the proximal interaction in the child's microsystems, and would probably run through the whole mesosystem in which the child is involved.

Landsberg, et al. (2005) define macro-system as the attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies inherent in the system of a particular society and culture which may have impact or be influenced by any of the above systems. They further cite democracy, social justice and ubuntu as examples of values and beliefs. These values and beliefs are very much inculcated into the schools system through the curriculum and other policies that are in the system. The constitution of the country made it possible for the citizens of the Republic of South Africa to be able to perceive themselves as people who can be able to compete at the global level. This change is indirectly connected to the learner but the effects of the larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading influence throughout the interaction of all layer (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The macrosystem value influences the family microsystems which are situated in the whole mesosystem and indirectly affecting the child's own development.

The last layer is the system that encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environment. This level called chronosystem, according to Donald, et al. (2010) has external or internal elements. One example of an external element is the death of a parent which is very common these years in the country with the effect of HIV and AIDS and other diseases and accidents. In schools the number of learners who are orphaned increases every year and some learners find themselves having to deal with taking care of other siblings and head the family. An example of the internal element is also what is very common is school where learners grow and get older and react differently to the environment. Overage learners are mostly caused by the fact that they are not achieving and are made to repeat grade and ultimately develop behaviour problems like bulling and resisting instructions.

In schools learners become at risk due to these factors and becoming part of the "out of school youth" to which EWP 6 (DOE, 2001) refers. They have the right to be able to participate in self-development and further skills acquisition that would enable them to gain employment and

participate productively in an inclusive democratic society, but the education system is unable to provide them with the opportunity to do so because the school system lacks the capacity to provide relevant resources and support. The school as a system that is managed professionally by the school management team should be able to take cognisance of the issues that hinder the development of the school system. The involvement of staff in collaborative decision making as a strategy of coping with the rapid pace of change is becoming irresistible for many school leaders (Hayes, 2009). Schools need support in order to cope with all rapid changes that are so overwhelming to them.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The concept of inclusive education is discussed within the operation of the school setting where the SMT plans and work towards responding to a call for ensuring that the school is inclusive. Considering the theoretical framework that underpins the concept (inclusive education), one cannot undermine the importance of the different systems having to work together in the implementation if inclusive education. This process makes the SMT to acknowledge the importance of individuals within a system as well as individuals in other systems as well. Taylor, (2009), argues that creating regulative orders in schools is, in the first instance, the job of the principal and school management further supports the aforementioned idea.

The next chapter describes the research process.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter defines the research process followed in the course of this study.   The research design and methodology, research field, research methods and analysis procedures are described in detail. The objectives of the study were as follows:

3.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research was designed such that it would answer the following questions:

- ✓ How is inclusive education understood by the SMT?
- ✓ What considerations do SMTs need to embark on to ensure that the schools become inclusive?
- ✓ What challenges do they encounter in transforming the school to become inclusive?

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.3.1   Research design

The case study design was selected because it provides the best platform to conduct an intensive investigation to single unit (Henning, 2005). In terms of the case study (Maree, 2007) defines this method as a study that strives towards a comprehensive and holistic understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study. The study enabled the researcher to get comprehensive understanding of the school in terms of how the SMT strives to make it inclusive.

According to Terre Blanche, et al. (2006), research approach is an intensive investigation of particular individuals. Rich and in depth information on how SMTs develop inclusive schools was obtained by using this research design. Maree, (2007) indicates that this approach offers a multi-perspective analysis in which the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of one or two participants in a situation, but also the views of other relevant actors and the

interaction between them. This kind of an approach is interpretive in nature and it enabled the researcher to get to know exactly what the school management team had to say about how they make their schools to be inclusive. By using the qualitative method the researcher embarked on the methodology that is located in the interpretive tradition (Henning, 2005). This method lends itself to the practical interpretation of educators' experiences in changing a school to an inclusive one.

3.3.2   Research Methodology

Terre Blanche, et al, (2006) state that research methodology is different from the research method.   Methodology is a process that is used and in this study it was qualitative in nature. Henning, (2004) agree with the above and emphasise that methodology is more than the collection of methods as it focuses on the research process. Methodology refers to the coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the goodness of fit to deliver the data and findings that reflect the research questions and suit the research purpose (Maree, 2007). Babbie & Mouton (2005) also define research methodology as focusing on the process and the kinds of tools and procedures used as research design that look towards what the product will be.

 Babbie and Mouton (2005) define qualitative research paradigm as the generic research approach in social research which takes its departure point as the insider perspective on social action. In this research study the researcher focused on human actions in terms of their experiences in the situation that they are involved in, qualitative inquiry to understand the phenomenon that is flexible, unique and evolves throughout the research process. That enabled the researcher to gather more relevant and rich data from the five (5) SMT members in one primary school. The researcher was also interested in having direct contact with the participants to gain meanings of the phenomenon.

Terre Blanche, et al, (2006) explain that such methodology describes and interprets the participants' feelings and experiences in human terms. It enables the researcher to use a case study as a systematic enquiry into an event or a set of related events with the aim of describing and explaining the phenomenon of interest (Maree, 2007). The researcher decided on the

qualitative paradigm because she was interested in the social phenomenon where the researcher becomes the insider in the field for her to be able to describe and understand human behaviour. This is important as it enables the researcher to get information that is of the nature of social reality from people who are involved in the setting. It also helps in bridging the gap that usually exists between the researched (educators in this case) and the researcher. Qualitative study is evident in the research wherein the participants' freedom and natural development of action and representation is explored. Henning, (2005) explains that qualitative research is a study that is presented largely through language and is about the meaning constructed from the language that presents the data.

The participants freely expressed themselves in words in terms of what they consider critical in ensuring that their school is inclusive. The researcher was interested in the views of the SMT members with regards to how they ensure that their schools' culture was conducive to teaching, learning, care and support. The study used the qualitative research as a methodological approach that informed the data collection and technique that shared a set of principles or logic that suits the research study. Cohen, Manion & Morrison, (2007) indicate that qualitative approaches can create and perpetuate unequal relations, because the researcher goes into the field as a researcher not as a friend. If it were not for the research, the researcher would not have gone into the field. That dictated the researcher's role in the field when conducting a qualitative study where the main objective was just to collect data.

3.4   RESEARCH SITE / FIELD

The study was undertaken in the Umgoqozi District in the province of KwaZulu Natal. A purposive sample of one school from this district was identified for the study. A purposive sample is made up of typical cases that the researcher is interested in (Cohen et al, 2007). The location of school is very important because there are some financial implications that are involved in visiting the school that is why the selection of school becomes an important exercise.

Planning for a naturalistic research, according to Cohen, et al, (2007) includes locating the field where the research study will be conducted. The district where the study is conducted has two (2)

circuits and seventeen (17) wards that are located in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Most of the wards are in rural areas with very bad terrain and gravel roads. Each ward varies in terms of the number of schools from 26 schools to 35 schools. This one primary school was selected on the basis that they were willing to participate and they were not part of the inclusive education pilot project that was implemented in the district. This primary school was also chosen because it is in a rural setting. Such settings are often affected by poverty and underdevelopment, resulting in a number of barriers to learning and development.

3.4.1   Dadada Primary School

Dadada has an enrolment of 738 learners from Grade R to Grade 7. There are 21 educators at the school, 14 females and 7 males. The school had 5 SMT members, principal is a male, deputy is a female and they had three HOD members (two females and a male). This school is in one of the very deep rural places in the district and it is quite an old school. Most of the learners at the school come from disadvantaged family backgrounds. This was evident as you drive to the school seeing women going to fetch water from the nearby river and seeing muddy houses with no electricity. It was not a struggle for the principal to communicate with other SMT members for the purpose of allowing the researcher access to the school.

The researcher's written request to conduct the study was accepted in writing and that document could not be attached because it would compromise confidentiality. On arrival the SMT members were ready and willing to co-operate with the researcher. Even though the school is located in a deep rural area but they do have water pipes from tanks supplying them with water and there is also electricity. The school had been affected by political violence and unemployment rate is very high in this area. They also have a remarkable number of orphaned learners and those who are heading families, as supported by the SMT.

3.5   RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods define the tools and instruments that were used in the study. Qualitative approaches make use of words that come from data collected through interviews, group discussions, diaries, observations, and other qualitative research design methods (Cohen,

Manion, and Morrison, 2007). In this research study, the researcher had 10 interview questions that were asked to the participants in a focus group interview. All SMT members were selected for the purpose of the study because they share common traits as they are team members of school management. During the process of data collection, it is important to ensure that the nature of qualitative study needs the collection method that elicits the thick and rich description of the participants involved in the study (Cohen, et al, 2007).

The data collection technique that was employed in this qualitative study took the form of language, as participants were be interviewed. The participants were asked questions in English and they also responded in English but mixing it with IsiZulu. The researcher noticed that when participants started responding to the first question, they were so cautious of their responses. When the third participant started to respond, she responded in both English and IsiZulu and that gave all of them a break through in terms of responding in both languages.

As the research method used in the study was the focus group interview, it aimed at generating a wide range of responses and for the purposes of cross checking data where participants complement each other (Cohen, et al 2007). The participants responded to the interview questions that were prepared as semi structured interview questions. All SMT members were asked the same questions (see Appendix C). The semi structured interviews allowed for lengthy discussions with the participants because probing, paraphrasing and rephrasing encourages that exercise (Maree, 2007). Babbie and Mouton (2005) state that, interviews give more conversations between the researcher and the interviewees in the data collection process. Hence the researcher was able to identify information that was not relevant and related to the study and able to guide the participants so that they come back to the focus of the interview.

The natural setting allowed the researcher to make field notes so that all the data that was collected was captured. That was also complemented by the cd player used to record the conversations of the participants so that all what they said was captured, with the permission of participants (de Vos, 2005). Questions were given to the participants prior and that enabled the

researcher to gather and capture more unique information. The researcher also kept field notes to minimize the loss of data.

3.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis was a continuous exercise that was informed by the data production process (Maree, 2007). This meant that the researcher began to identify common trends that were emerging as the data was presented. Data analysis is one of the crucial stages that require the researcher to be able to capture and understand the data in writing. Henning, (2004) asserts that the global analysis is inclusive of a tool for thematic, network analyses. That is why data collected was analysed according to the themes that emerged when collecting data.

Since the study was interpretive in nature, the themes were aligned with the research questions and the responses of the participants given to the researcher. The main themes were identified from the notes as well as transcripts of tape recordings. Cohen, et al. (2007) define data analysis as a process that involves organising, accounting for, and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of participants' definition of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. This definition gave the researcher different forms of data analysing and in this study the process was on identifying the themes. Henning (2004) explains that the very structure of data is seen as the organising logic – therefore main themes were searched by intensive studying of the text in terms of making field notes. The researcher received rich data by probing the participants so that they give more information on their views about the matter. Data was presented as raw information organised into patterns which came to life when interpreted and organised thematically, (Creswell, 1994).

Emerging patterns and codes were classified and reclassified into themes from the data collected. That is why the researcher needed to plan the layout and structure of the instruments that was used for data collection for proper analysis so that data is collected into chunks of information (Maykut & Morehouse, 2004). Cohen, et al. (2007) indicates that in qualitative research, data analysis commences during the data collection process. That is why it was important to listen to all the information that was conveyed by participants.

During the process of collecting and listening to all the data, the researcher was able to avoid information overload and several data compressions was done (Huberman & Miles, 2008), which prescribed that selection of significant features for the cases of focus be taken into consideration. Practically, it is expected that educators in the process of collecting data mention a number of issues that are obviously not going to be ignored but used as rich data from which the focus areas are drawn and that happened a lot. Cohen, et al. (2007) further mentions that the process of data analysis is like funnelling from the wide to the narrow. Cohen, et al. (2007) highlight that it is important to take cognisance of data transcription so that massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity is minimized at all cost. As indicated by Henning (2005), data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing, emerging and iterative or non-linear process.

3.7   DATA TRUSTWORTHINESS

Data trustworthiness is an essential component of qualitative research where findings should reflect the reality of the experiences of the participants. The participants were provided with an opportunity to review the researcher's interpretation of the data (Henning, 2005) and that helped in identify trustworthiness and credibility. Participants were allowed to ask for an explanation where the question was not clear to them. It was also very crucial and important for the researcher to ensure that her beliefs do not influence the collection of data in order to produce reliable data. Dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated process of data collection (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006). The researcher made sure that the information recorded is not destroyed and the field notes taken during the process can be used to confirm data collected.

3.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A number of ethical considerations were important during the process of data collection and analysis. It was important for the researcher to gain access to schools by communicating with the responsible circuit and ward manager. All the stakeholders were involved in the negotiation of access to the schools (the principals and teachers who are members of the SMT). The participants had understanding of and purpose of the study. The informed consent Fontana & Frey, 1998) from the school principal was obtained in writing. When the study began, the

participants were assured of the fact that they will remain anonymous and their schools will also be anonymous.

The confidentiality of the conversation whether taped or not was also assured, that it would only be for the purpose of the study (Henning, 2005). Cohen, et al, (2007) says that the consent should be fully informed of what is to take place and that is what was in the letters sent to the school. Participants were given assurance that their names and name of the school won't be mentioned. Henning, (2005) further indicates that the researcher remains accountable for the ethical quality of the inquiry and should take great care and when in doubt ask for advice from the supervisor for instance. The provincial department of education and the University of KwaZulu Natal also granted the researcher the ethical clearance.

3.9   LIMITATIONS

The first limitation is that of the researcher as an instrument of collecting data, whereby the researcher might have influenced what was heard in the research field (Robson, 2002). The researcher might have had own biases brought to the study and they might have had influence. With that in mind the researcher made sure that neutrality at all cost is brought into the process of the research study. The other limitation was based on the fact that the sample size of only one school may not be used to generalize the findings and get the clear picture of the SMT member's views in the province for that matter. However, the study made the school to think differently and they learned a lot around the implications of policy and implementation in terms of the gaps in the way they manage their school.

The researcher has also been influenced by the experience and exposure gained as a teacher and SMT member in a mainstream school with special class for learners with barriers to learning and development. These learners were excluded and not participating fully in the school activities and yet admitted at the school. They were the responsibility of one teacher who happen to have interest and a little bit of knowledge about learners with special needs. In most cases they will be isolated, ridiculed and neglected by other educators and obviously stigmatized by other learners. The fact that the researcher works for the department of education under special education component was also a limitation because the participants thought of how much they don't do

right when they see a district official. The researcher has observed the difficulty in policy implementation and practice in schools especially with the SMT members who are the drivers and gate keepers of the process of school development and improvement. However, this is not only the case with inclusive education policy but other policies as well.

3.10   CONCLUSION

The chapter outlines clearly the qualitative research paradigm as a generic approach in social research according to which the researcher takes the departure point as the insider perspective on social action (Maree, 2007). The method of analyzing data is also explained as it is thought of prior so that the findings are not negatively influenced just because data was not analyzed properly. Data analyses discussed indicated that the process continued until all data had been analysed and classified into themes. The next chapter deals with the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated critical considerations for the SMT members in making their schools inclusive. The research questions that were used in eliciting data were the following:

- How is inclusive education understood?
- What is considered as important in the creation of inclusive school?
- What challenges are encountered in developing inclusive school?

From the above research questions the researcher developed focus group interview questions that were used to interview the 5 participants who were SMT members. The researcher used the research questions as a guide in identifying themes that emerged from focus group discussions. The following themes were developed from the research questions:

- SMT's understandings of IE
- Critical considerations
- Challenges

4.2 Discussion of results

	Theme heading	Page
4.2.1	SMT's understanding of IE	42
4.2.2	Critical considerations	49
4.2.3	Challenges	56

4.2.1 SMT's understanding of IE

All 5 SMT members responded to the questions that related to their understanding of inclusive education. Even though the responses were in very short sentences at first but that changed when

one female HOD started to respond in both English and IsiZulu. It appears as if answering in English only was a barrier in terms of giving out responses freely. As the researcher was conducting a focus group interview, the participants took turns in responding to questions and just adding when they felt like.

Each time the question was asked, the other SMT members wanted to give the principal a chance to speak first. EWP 6 on inclusive education was launched in 2001 and there are several advocacy campaigns and workshops that have been conducted in districts. Besides all the information given throughout the years but the educators responses is indicating limited understanding of inclusive education. Of course there are many factors that contribute to that, as discussed below. It has also come up very clearly that the schools are not aware of what the department is putting in place if any, in changing their schools to be inclusive. The support that the department is injecting seem not to be enough and also not giving them specifics in terms of what is expected of them as school management team members. That kind of an operation makes educators to be overwhelmed as they feel inundated with so many responsibilities. Eventually they find themselves not sure wherether they are doing the right thing or not, whether they know or they don't.

When they were asked the first question which was based on their understanding of IE, the principal said:

"*Inclusive education is the way of dealing with learners' different disabilities and abilities*". (Mr Head)

"*It is the way of dealing with learner's barriers to learning*". (HOD Xaba)

HOD Yani said:
"*Inclusive education is the way of dealing with all learners*".

The researcher picked up that, as they responded in English, they were not as free as they could be when language is not a barrier. That was evident when the deputy principal started to respond in both languages and said:

"It is about educating learners with barriers and slow learners. Educating learners with different barriers – like intrinsic and extrinsic barriers like internal and external ones. Some you can see and some you can't. That is the way I understand it". (Mrs Dephutha).

Xaba also added that:

"It is an education that enables every learner to learn. For an example, slow learners, physical, mentally disabled and they are not called disturbed because that is not allowed. We must use disabled".

These responses indicate that theoretically the principal and other SMT members have got an idea of what inclusive education is all about. But it also indicates that their understanding is very narrow and not embracing all the other barriers as discussed in the literature (cf 2.2.2.1). Their understanding was only limited to intrinsic barriers and excluded other barriers that might be systemic, societal and even pedagogical as indicated in EWP (DoE, 2001). The narrow understanding of inclusive education made the researcher to conclude that the paradigm shift from medical to social model of understanding has not taken place as indicated by Naicker, (2000) (cf 2.3).

There are few things that they indicated to be supporting the fact that their understanding of IE is shared with other members of the staff. One of them is the fact that they do have an ILST established at school of which according to EWP 6, its role is to ensure that barriers identified are discussed in team meetings where intervention strategies and recommendations come out. Regular meetings are held to discuss learner cases but still educators feel that the positive change in terms of these identified challenges is not very noticeable.

The Mr Head mentioned that:

"Yes, we share the same understanding of inclusive education. We have ILST committee as a support structure at school where we deal with problems of learners, educators and the school itself dealing with 3 portfolio committees within the ILST".

The researcher noticed that the 3 portfolio committees of the ILST were written on the board of the staff room where the interview was taking place. It might happen that they had just been visited by one of the district officials to support them with the establishment of this support structure. It was clear though that they were aware of the establishment of this support team and what is expected of them.

The Mrs Deputha said that:

"We have different kinds of learner problems. All educators know that we need to support all learners and we share learner information and problems with parents sometimes parents come and make you understand the problems the learners have. So that as a class teacher you can understand what the problem is".

This indicates that it is not just certain individuals that are responsible for supporting learners who experience barriers to learning and development, but it is all educators and all SMT members working collaboratively. That is supported by Leithwood, et al, (cf 2.6) in the literature where they support that the decision making is based on participative leadership which is a joint effort.

Xaba said:

"We meet and have meetings sharing strategies and understanding of learner barriers. We do share understanding and share what one can do if you have a problem".

Yani indicated that they all understand IE by mentioning that:

"Poor learner performance and may be the way a learner behaves makes us to see that there is a problem with that individual learner. You can see that there is something wrong and then you try. What you do in terms of activities you must include that learner you must not exclude him because you have seen that he has the problem".

Zungu added that:

"If the performance of a learner is low and sometimes the child does nothing, you know that he or she has a problem".

The Mrs Deputha added and said:

"You can see that there is a problem and able to identify the problem when teaching them and this one not responding well".

Xaba mentioned that:

"We include them in all activities. You first have to identify the problem".

Yani also said that:

"The performance starts by being low and it develops as you support the learner".

The emphasis seems to be on learner performance, a sign that they only see intrinsic barriers at the exclusion of all other barriers. All these responses indicate that all learners identified as having barriers are supported. Learners are also not excluded in teaching and learning and educators are aware of the fact that when learners are supported they do improve. As Booth (2000) mentioned in the literature (cf 2.2.2.1) that inclusive education emphasizes access to school and maximizes participation.

Furthermore, as proof of their poor understanding of inclusive education, the researcher identified that they are not sure of how an inclusive school looks like. They argued a lot in terms of how these learners can be supported.

Mr Head said that:

"It should be like a special school. It should be a school where learners are given special attention. There should be specific periods for supporting just them. Yes, but special attention should be given".

Zungu came in and said:

"There should have their own class, NO they must be with others but additional support be given. Not a class but certain period be allocated for supporting them".

Mrs Deputha quickly said:

"If you have a special class for them they are stigmatized".

Xaba said:

"But we need to deal with them separately".

Yani said:

"But we can say it, but it is not inclusive. But that will be un inclusive".

This debate highlights the confusion experienced at this school about how support should be rendered. It was clear that they wished they could support these learners in special classes as they felt practically that could work but policy does not allow. There is also mismatch in terms of policy and practical implementation and that creates mixed feelings amongst them. Naicker (2000) talks about the fact that there are lots of exclusions during curriculum implementation and that is why these educators debate how best can they do this because at the end of it all the curriculum is the only vehicle for supporting learners. Basically all these educators agree on the fact that these learners who experience barriers to learning and development should be supported but the problem is how because the policy is advocating inclusion. The researcher is identifying that in as much as they try to include them but these learners don't get enough and effective support that will change their behavior.

The participants went on to indicate their understanding of IE with regards to how they think an inclusive school looks like by indicating the following aspects.

Mr Head emphasized that:

"It is very important that an inclusive school should have relevant resources that are relevant to these learners because they need specialized resources and we don't know all these material resources. The department must include these material resources in the catalogues that are given to us when we order the resources".

The principal here indicates that he is aware of the fact that relevant specialized material resources can assist learners who experience barriers to learning and development. The principal is also saying a very valid point about the catalogues that they receive which are not inclusive of the other material resources that they may need. But at the same time this indicates lack of creativity and exposure on the side of the SMT as they are expecting the department to spoon

feed them with the list of such resources. Also, if they have not been trained on how to use those resources, how would they use them?

Mrs Deputha also raised another point and said:

"All learners must be admitted at school and be familiar with the environment and their parents must not be limited only to taking them to special schools because most of these special schools are far from their homes".

This indicates that ideally it is important for all schools to be able accommodate all learners from the area for obvious reasons because there are few special schools and the majority of them are in urban areas. Children from the community where the participants came from would not be able to know even where the special school is. DoE (2001) (cf 2.3 (a)) also indicates that special school should accommodate learners who require high levels of support and some of these learners might not be very severe and therefore should be admitted in schools nearer to their homes.

Zungu added that:

"Many children in the community will be assisted because if you have a disability people think you can't do anything and they are mostly not allowed to mix with other people".

"Even physically challenged children are at home not attending school. The poor community can be supported and a number of them can come to school and not stay at home". (Xaba)

Yani said that:

"People who are at home not doing anything can be minimized and that will mean more people getting education and skills and not becoming dependant on those who are working".

These points are still indicating that they understand the importance of access to education as EWP 6 talks about the out of school children and youth, even those with disabilities that should be mobilized from the community homes to schools (cf 2.2.2.1 (d)). It is very clear as indicated before that the educators' understanding of inclusive education focuses on the learner deficits and other barriers are not really dominant in their understanding of what inclusive education is. One can conclude though by mentioning that these educators do mention the other things that are indicating inclusive education but not as part of the challenges and barriers that inclusive education is talking about.

4.2.2 SMT's critical considerations

Planning is part of the important roles of the SMT members as the school system has other systems that are affecting it. As Donald et al, (2002) indicates that no system is totally independent, and to ensure its survival, it is important for the school system to interact with other systems. This means that the social, political and economical systems are influenced or they influence the education system directly or indirectly. The quality of teaching and learning in schools is negatively affected by factors like poverty, HIV and AIDS, crime and unemployment within the socio-political systems. That is why it is crucial for the SMT to acknowledge these factors by incorporating action plans that will mitigate and minimize them. Poverty is one of the issues that were raised first as what they consider important in making their school inclusive.

Mr Head explained that:

"Sometime if we see that a learner has a problem of hunger, we sometime buy them food. We have a lot of such cases in our schools. Sometimes we even give that learner vegetable from the garden so that they can cook at home".

Yani asserted:

"We do have a case of a learner with that problem and we discuss her case in our meetings but some of the interventions are not done. For an example the parent has never responded to the invitation that we sent as we want her to come to school so that she can tell us exactly what is happening at school and also the learner's her progress is very low".

Mrs Dephutha added that:

"This learner is in grade 6. She is given activities at her own level but still not enough because she is not at the level of other learners and she is far below. And we wonder what will happen when she reaches grade 7 next year".

Mr Head pointed out that:

"She does need the teacher's attention and always wants her work to be marked as well and she will wait in front of the teacher for her work to be marked. It is very difficult to see such situations. She stands in front of you to see if you marking her. Once you do that she feels good".

Xaba referred to another case and said that:

"There is a boy who comes to school all the time even if it is raining but he cannot do anything. It is not always all subjects you know eg he is good in Maths. We need more strategies of dealing with these learners but we do try we don't just leave the problem un attended".

This discussion indicates that the SMT members are aware of the importance of coming together to discuss cases of learners who experience barriers to learning and development. As indicated in the literature, DoE (2009) advocates for the establishment of the ILST with its main focus under the learner support portfolio being to discuss learner cases and come up with intervention plans (cf 2.6). Even though they consider it important that they intervene and support these learners but they still feel that learners are not supported enough to be able to progress to the next grade.

Mrs Dephutha raised another point and said:

"If we can have a class for them and we attend them differently. Others will say it a class for stupid ones. I tried it once but the district official said, no, it is not allowed".

What is noticeable is that the SMT is always willing to do something in terms of supporting these learners. What is lacking is capacity with regards to the plan that will be in line with the policies of the department in addressing these learner barriers. The above statement from the deputy principal is also indicating that they consider important that learners should not be discriminated against. In chapter two (cf 2.2.2.1), it was highlighted in the literature that material resources that are relevant and specialized for the different learner needs play a crucial role. There are so many other things that are said to be important in an inclusive school as indicated below:

Zungu mentioned that:

"The school must have resources to support these learners with barriers to learning and teaching aids are important".

The adaptation of physical infrastructure is a very important aspect in ensuring that accessibility especially to people with physical disabilities prevails (cf 2.2.2.1). It is also important to note that the SMT is taking cognizance of the fact that they might have other disabilities like physical and not only mental disability. Most of the schools are not accessible to wheelchair users and that makes schools not to be able to admit learners who use wheel chairs.

Mrs Dephutha indicated that:

"Buildings should also be inclusive to support all learners because it is not only about supporting mental learners but also physically disabled learners".

Regarding physical infrastructure Xaba asserted that:

"In an inclusive school there should be signs as well so that learners can see easily where what is. Signs should be there around the premises to define things and give more explanation. Signs that define different things. Even in classrooms things should be clearer to them".
Yani also stresses that:

"In an inclusive school parents should be more involved in terms of their children's education. They should be available when they are needed. Just like we use to invite them as a mainstream school and make them aware and involved in their child's learning. Even parents of an inclusive school must be involved even if you talk with them separately. They must not be shy. They must not be shy so that they are able to support their children. When they get home thy must continue with the support of their children".

The issue that was emphasized here is of the involvement of parents not only by coming to school but at home. Parents should be able to support their children with their school work. This is a huge challenge because most of the parents in rural areas are illiterate and cannot even read and write. One of the societal barriers identified is of absent parents and a huge number of learners who are orphaned and are heading their families (cf 2.2.2.1).

All the SMT members agree on the fact that all educators should be trained on inclusive education so that they are better able to support learners who experience barriers to learning and development. Educators felt that inclusive education could work if the government can be able to fulfill certain obligations that are written in the policy document. That includes the issue of teacher development and trainings on a number of aspects like cooperative learning, multi-level teaching and curriculum adaptation (cf 2.4). Pedagogical barriers also highlight in the literature (cf 2.2.2.1) that educators need to have adequate skills in order to be able to deal with diversity and meet the needs of all learners.

Xaba said that:

"I think even teachers to be more skilled in an inclusive school and be developed through workshops".

Mrs Dephutha added that:

"There should be more development on teaching these learners. We do go to workshops but it is not enough. Teachers in an inclusive school should be patient with these learners. (they laughed) As teachers we are not the same in terms of how we deal with these learners. If he has mucus we must know how to deal with them. I have an experience where I called one learner who was struggling with reading and writing and supported her individually and she excelled after that. So I know we can do it if we can be patient with them".

Zungu agreed and said that:

"Everybody must be aware of how to deal with these learners. Now, we all know that teachers are like Thomas, (bakholwa ngokuzibonela), so they all want to be trained so that they can be able to support these learners. The department has a tendency of inviting representatives and sometimes it becomes difficult to cascade information that was given to an individual for only two hours and expected to share that with other educators in few minutes".

This shortcoming was also highlighted by Ntombela (2010).

Mrs Dephutha also mentioned that:

"Campaigns on inclusive education to be done for parents and community, to make them know about IE so that they understand it because if they do, they will be able to cooperate better".

This is a very important observation since inclusive education needs the cooperation of communities to succeed. If the community served does not buy into it, it cannot work.

Another important point raised by Mr Head is the following:

"For the school to run smoothly it is important to see these learners progressing. For all learners to progress in different ways, it is difficult for them not to pass at the end of the year. I understand why the department says they must all pass. Of course all children must succeed. We misinterpret that and say they must pass even if they don't know anything. All learners must succeed. An inclusive school will make all learners to progress. It is painful to see these learners not progressing. It saddens me to see them in one grade all the time (retention). It is so painful to stay with them and I have been with them".

The principal said the above statement with emotions and even other SMT members agreed with him because they strongly believe that the learner performance should be right in an inclusive school. They also believed very strongly that additional human resource provisioning can benefit them as they felt they needed some skills that will empower them to be more effective in teaching all learners.

Zungu mentioned that:

"Specialist will also help educators to be able to support these learners. For learners' scholastic performance to improve you need specialists to make teachers accept these learners and be able to handle them appropriately. This will also make the enrolment to increase because all the out of school children will be sent to school because they see the support that is offered at school".

Although the notion of a school for all was not referred to, a supportive teaching environment means that a school is relevant to all and able to address all learners' needs.

The principal is strongly concerned about the performance of learners as he mentioned that:

"As a principal I do monitoring of all school activities, curricular and co-curricular. We create opportunities to show the achievement of these learners especially their performance on special days like open days, competitions, awards. Even those who are struggling, they are included and they become happy but we don't say these have problems. We involve all of them even those with barriers to learning. Teachers are also awarded because of the good work they do. They are praised and as staff, we praise them as individuals so that they are encouraged to continue doing the good things. There are teachers who have embraced in inclusive education, not because they have studied it. Even male teachers are able to pick it up that there is something wrong with a certain learner. Not just learners in their classrooms even when the class teacher has not seen everything. It is not that these educators have special qualifications but it is because of passion. It is important that we become close to these learners so that they can trust us and be able to talk to us. One male teacher identified a learner who was sexually abused and he did follow the case and the learner was assisted. As educators we share intervention strategies with others in our meetings".

It is evident that the SMT (and the school at large) is committed to create an inclusive school environment even though they feel that they are not equipped enough but they try their best. It is also becoming very clear that passion is important as the principal points it out. Although they do not consider their practice as upholding learners' human rights, it is nothing but that, as supported by Engelbrecht (2006) in the literature (cf 2.4) where he says that, the paradigm shift of supporting learners with barriers is actually a human rights issue.

Zungu mentioned that it will be important for them as a school to be an inclusive school but this had concern:

"In fact we would like to be an inclusive school, but what if they are not giving us such status of being an inclusive school. That is a challenge. If the inspector (referring to the researcher) can give us additional educators (at least two) it can be much better".

Mr Head raised another point and said:

"May be we need to be provided with cars so that we don't depend on the public transport. We can be able to come early and leave late trying to help these learners. The rural community depends on us and if we cannot help, who else can help them".

The issue of the physical infrastructure was also raise by the principal as he felt that more resources are needed to support these learners so that they achieve. As indicated in the literature (cf 2.2.2.1), specialized rooms like libraries and laboratories are important in an inclusive school as those resources maximize participation in teaching and learning.

Mr Head said that:

"We do have more land because we are in a rural area here for those rooms to be built. We need the department to build us a library and a laboratory. We have computers that were donated by Toyota Teach but no computer rooms and now we are using the HODs office for these computers to be installed there. IT guys are busy working on installing these computers as we speak".

The concern with being given a status is clearly linked to resources, no status, no resources. This is common concern or argument used by schools that they lack resources, therefore, are unable to support learners.

4.2.3   Challenges faced by SMT in developing an inclusive school

The last theme that emerged from the discussion is the challenges that they experience as a school in making the school inclusive. It was very clear that the school is experiencing a number of challenges with regards to making the school inclusive but they also shared.

Educators are still confused with the role of the coordinator who attends inclusive education meetings because it seems as if that person (overwhelmed with responsibility as if she) is the only one expected to address learner barriers. Coordinators are nominated by other staff members to attend the meetings with the aim of coming and cascade information to all of them.

Mr Head firstly said that:

Yes, we do encounter challenges in transforming our school because we need assistance so that all educators are able to deal with learner barriers. So that learners are all assisted. If there is one educator who is the coordinator for each phase, it becomes too much for that person. The huge responsibility is left on that individual because they have this understanding that it is that coordinator who is expected to do everything in terms of supporting these learners. It will be better if there is an assistant. If you see that the child had a problem when she was born you must do the follow ups. For an example, to gather the information about a learner you need to consult parents and have a meeting as well. It is difficult because there are a number of these learners with barriers and you need to do follow ups as well. You deal with a learner one by one, which is helpful and follow up until she is supported well. It is better if a learner is attended alone. We need assistants because there is no time to deal with individuals all the time. Some problems are just minor but there is no time, for an example a learner with a sight problem you know that she must sit in front but it is difficult because there are no assistants.

The first part of this response indicates that all educators would like to be given more information on regular bases instead of getting short reports from those who attend meetings. It is also clear that the cascade model of getting information is not working for them because it does not empower them enough to deal with the learner cases. It is also clear that these educators are aware of the fact that if they can be given teacher assistants at school that will make a huge

difference because they will get time to do follow up and support individuals. The participants also raised an issue of the fact that educators are not the same in terms of their personalities and the way they deal with learners in general.

Zungu said that:

We do share with others these problems but the way we deal with problems depends on individual educators and that is a big challenge in transforming the school".

Mrs Dephutha asserted that:

"Yes, we do encounter challenges but the way we deal with problems of learners depends on individual teacher. Sometimes we fail to deal with learner problems because we are overloaded. We feel it is not enough. We have to deal with parents and do follow-ups on learner cases. There is so much information that is needed when planning to assist a learner, but there is and no time".

The need for a common understanding of what an inclusive school is and does is necessary to create a common purpose. Without that each educator will be pulling in a different direction.

Xaba said that:

"There are so many challenges and what we are doing is not enough because you just do one thing and move one. When you deal with a learner there is a lot that you can do but we don't have time for that".

Yani raised another challenge and said that:

"Sometimes a learner does nothing because she just cannot do anything in terms of scholastic work. You can see it is not going ok. Even if you know what inclusive education means but you still leave other learners behind and you can see that you are failing these learners. One learner is not doing anything and not even willing to submit because she writes nothing. The learner who does that has siblings who are also not doing anything and one of them has just started talking in class because it is towards the end of the year. She is short tempered and as a teacher you must not be hush to her, you must always be laughing".

Zungu said that:

We have so many of these learners. (she started counting them) At the foundation phase one boy just said, "I don't do this". As an educator, you know and you can see that he really cannot. I don't even punish him because I know he cannot. He is always at school and comes early everyday even on rainy days. I always ask myself, where and what is wrong. We all try to help him but it is difficult but he tries in Maths and he passes it".

The above indicates that educators are willing to support struggling learners but there are faced with other challenges that hinder them from supporting these learners effectively. It is also noticed that educators know these learners, which means that they have identified them and are aware of their different barriers and challenges. The problem now is skills on their side as well as proper support systems put in place given the fact that they are also failing to plan and manage their work effectively. The participants also believe that learners know something but as educators they fail to ensure that learners utilize their full potential.

It sounds like there are instances where educators have no idea what to do. This may point to lack of or inadequate professional development.

Mr Head declared that:

"Not that we don't know but we need more information. Some of these learners have like "locked brains", not because they are really empty but, we as educators "lock them up" sometimes. We do not understand them and we do not understand their needs and we sometimes insult them if they are not achieving well".

Another challenge that they are faced with is of specialist staff like remedial educators, therapist and psychologists. One of the barriers indicated in the literature is shortage of specialists' skill (cf 2.2.2.1). Participants feel that if they can have continuous support of these specialists supporting them as educators, it will be much better. The challenge is that even in district offices and special schools there is a shortage of these specialists and yet they are critical in ensuring that learners experiencing barriers are supported. These specialists should also form part of the assessment teams as they operate in special school in the multi disciplinary groups as indicated in the literature (cf 2.3).

Xaba said that:

"We need skills and specialists to be employed to teach us how to cater for these learners. We try but it is not enough. It is not enough to attend the meetings for just two hours but we need more workshops for all educators to be trained not just a few".

Another challenge that the participants mentioned very strongly has to do with the workload and being overwhelmed with so many things to do. As members of the SMT they are responsible for teaching as well. They are also having different responsibilities according to their levels as indicated in the literature (cf 2.6). All members of the SMT have additional responsibilities of supporting their sub-ordinates in many ways and that involved administrative work as well in terms of record keeping.

Mrs Deputha raised the issue and said that one of the challenges that they are faced with is that:

"There are so many of these learners who experience barriers to learning and development and as an educator I become overloaded because I have too many learners in one class and also responsible for so many learning areas. And I fail to support all of them. Syllabus to be completed and these learners make you to leave others behind".

Xaba also added and said that:

"For example as a grade 4 educator who is an HOD has two sections of 72 learners and I am responsible for 4 learning areas. We are overloaded with many learners and many learning areas".

Xaba"s situation indicates that those numbers are way above norms and standards for staffing. It is clear that there is shortage of staff at the school.

Yani said:

"As an HOD for foundation phase, grade 3 has 39 learners and I teach all three learning programmes. Now it becomes difficult to support those who are left behind. If I had to deal with those who are struggling, I can't finish all of them. We also need to cover the syllabus and finish everything planned for the specific grade. It is also a challenge that all activities and tasks planned and given to learners must have proof of evidence that the task was done and it becomes too much. What is even worse is that all that must be filed and all files to be up to date, it is just so much".

Mr Head said that:

"One learner with learning barriers is equal to so many of them, like 10 learners. You get them in different grades. All classes have these learners and you have to deal with them. I don't know how we can give each other periods where we change time to deal with them. I think we need

extra periods so that we can be able to support them as a grade eg take a group of 10 learners and give them extra time and support, you see the difference and the number of these struggling learners decreases. Some just need more time and the problem is solved. But you can't do that all the time. I did that and I saw the difference but because there are so many responsibilities it was not sustained and had no time to do it all the time and they went back again. But others in terms of the rest of the class can be ignored and less attended to as well. Now we don't know what to do. It's just so difficult".

Mrs Deputha said that:

"SMT is also overloaded and responsible for teaching load and monitoring and attending ward and circuit meetings make monitoring of other educators work and progress to be so poorly done because you do not do it thoroughly and sometimes do not do it at all. There are no assistant teachers to help us and that make things to be more difficult and we end up not functioning well ".

Mr Head went on to say that:

"As the principal and educator of the school I fail to deal with these challenges. I seriously need help. How can I be helped? I think I do not even have organizational skills now. I am not organized at all. There are so many things that I have to do. I try my best but in vein. ("kuphelela emoyeni"). It is a challenge even transport does not allow. I was praying for the car to God. Our school is in a rural area and if we think of supporting these learners early in the morning before school starts or late in the afternoon after school, we can miss the public transport that we are using. You cannot even come early. Learners also go long distances to school and they get tired. In the morning they come tired already and after hours they can be at risk and vulnerable when others have left them. The department must do something really. This is such a big problem. We are helpless. We have learners from one family who have the same problem which is caused by family circumstances and what is happening at home. When you try and assist them in any way, it doesn't help because they go back to the same situation and

environment. It's like their ears and eyes are closed. These children do not have parents and a relative who does not have children is taking care of all of them. They live with the uncle and the uncle's wife does not have children. We do not have enough information about them because she doe not come to school. This female or guardian who lives with them does not even attend parents meetings. She has a very bad and negative attitude even to educators. She only comes to school for the form for confirming child's schooling so that the child support grant continues. At one point she was shouting at educators. She even absent these learners from school when she wants and when you ask them why they were absent they tell you that the mother (guardian) ask them to do the washing. But you feel bad when they come to school because they do not learn anything anyway".

The above discussion indicates that the challenges that the SMT are faced with are enormous and need the intervention of the circuit, district and parental involvement. Their challenges are so cluttered to the extent that they just feel helpless. This is not in line with what the literature says with regards to the responsibility of the SMT in planning, organizing and controlling what is happening at school (cf 2.6.1). This indicates clearly that there is a gap in terms of the support for ensuring that they manage their school in a manner that will be responding to the needs of the school system. One typical example is of this parent who is not co-operative.

Mrs Deputha said:

"Can the government provide teacher assistants to do the marking at least because you give your learners work every day and you must mark that and give it back to learners and there is no time to mark everyday because you also have to teach them all the time and worse to support those who are struggling. Teacher assistants are even seriously needed because marking everyday is too much yet we need to support the struggling learners in so many grades. You do maths everyday and you have to mark. Language also needs marking and you have two classes

Yani said that:

"You can see that we are failing to deal with these challenges on our own. We need your help and more resources are needed, resources like special classrooms to relax with learners when doing other activities like reading for pleasure where they can sit down on the carpet in a spacious room. Even the office space is not enough because this is not a proper administration block. The department must really do something about this".

The last two responses indicate gaps that exist in the system in ensuring that inclusive education is implemented properly. Human resource provision should consider the appointment of teacher assistants so that educators work with them in mitigating and minimizing barriers to learning and development. This element is crucial as it can assist educators in dealing with many challenges that they are faced with. The other important key liver of change is physical infrastructure as educators feel that issues of redress and equity are still not addressed if a school does not have a proper administration blocks with offices for the SMT members as well as the special rooms like libraries, laboratories, multi purpose rooms and sick rooms. It is also important to not that physical infrastructure should also consider accessibility for learners who have physical disabilities.

4.3 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The way educators defined their understanding of inclusive education is clear evedentlyt limited and not informed by the South African definition of inclusive education. As part of the advocacy and information sharing session, discussions and debates around inclusive education should still continue to strength the educators understanding of inclusive education. From the above discussion it is clear that educators are enthusiastic to support learners with barriers to learning and development but are overwhelmed. Even though they mentioning so many challenges that they cannot solve and address themselves but they do raise suggestions in some of the aspects.

Training of educators is one of the main issues that the SMT feels should be addressed through training of all educators so that hey are all able to support learners. Buthelezi et al (2004) emphasize in the literature (cf 2.2.2.1) that in service training of educators on inclusive education in very crucial. The kind of training should also be supported with on site visits to ensure that implementation is done and that is the kind of support and assistance that educators need. It is

also important to make sure that he SMT members are more capacitated so that they are able to support and develop their sub-ordinates continuously at school level. This can also help in ensuring that the understanding of inclusive education is shared by all staff members at the school and therefore sustainability becomes possible. Internal professional development system should be set up so that developmental needs are identified.

Educators are also aware of the fact that all learners can learn and they need support for them to succeed. This is evident in their responses as they believe that when learner performance increase it indicates that teaching and learning is taking place. As the literature states that one of the barriers to learning is pedagogical barrier (cf 2.2.2.1) which relates to the teaching skills and methodology that educators employ to all learners. It is also clear in this regard that educators feel that the support of the teacher assistants is important so that all learners are supported and no one is left behind as it is happening now and it is worrying them when these learners are not achieving. What they don't know is that teacher assistants will need guidance as to what to do. If teachers don't know what to do, even if they have assistants they won't know what needs to be done.

Even though the SMT members have a limited understanding of inclusive education they do have an idea of how an inclusive school should look like. They indicated many aspects and elements of an inclusive school including the importance of material resources to support all learners. Based on their understanding of inclusive education, educators strongly believe that the following aspects are important in creating an inclusive school:

- Training of all educators on inclusive education
- Provision of teacher assistants
- Physical infrastructure be adapted to allow access and building of special rooms
- Parental involvement and participation so that the poor community also develops
- Learners to be accommodated in neighbouring schools
- Specialists like therapists to be employed to assist educators

There are many challenges that they are faced with and they even don't have answers and strategies of dealing with that. They strongly believe that in many cases, the department should do something. One challenge is based on their own capacity on planning and organizing their

work well so that they are able to support all learners as it is their (learners) basic human right to access quality education as indicated by Engelbrecht (2006) in the literature (cf 2.4). The SMT raised the issue of time limits as one big factor that makes them not to be able to support all these learners for so many reasons. One of them is that if they give individual support they will be delaying others and would not be able to finish the syllabus. That is very unfair to learners who experience barriers to learning and development because this means they (learners) must rush and meet the needs of the curriculum, whereas it should be the other way round.

The SMT members are also highlighting the workload given to them as a huge challenge that makes them to fail to monitor the other educators' work so that they are able to plan for support. That is where they feel that the employment of teacher assistants can assist them. Obviously this was mentioned without thorough understanding of how a teacher assistant operates in the classroom environment. They believed that teacher assistants will do marking for them which is a wrong perception. According to the literature, Forlin (2004) mentioned that teacher assistants should be responsible for assisting educators so that teaching focuses on addressing the needs of learners (cf 2.3).

SMT members also have feelings of helplessness as they do not know what to do with these huge challenges and they cry for help. This is also caused by the fact that some parents are also not responding positively and are resisting to work together with educators in assisting their children overcome their challenges so that they can achieve.

4.4 CONCLUSION

When the researcher was thinking about conducting this study, she was convinced that the understanding if IE may not be 100%. What was also of huge concern is that schools are doing a lot but they do not have an understanding of wherether that is important or not, so that they can intensify it and incorporate that in their plans. In doing so it will be important even to think about funding those critical plan as they would know that they are critical. To them it is just business as usual as they would try certain things and fail to sustain that. That makes it clear that what should be considered important and critical is not really noticed and continuously implemented

so that barriers to learning and development are minimized, thus ensuring that the school is inclusive.

The culture and ethos of this school is such that there are many good practices or pockets of excellence that one can identify but all that is not considered important in the sense that educators feel it is not enough. It is very obvious that this school can be developed and become an inclusive school if it can really be supported and monitored well so that all the critical consideration for insuring that the school is inclusive are mainstreamed and incorporated in the daily practices.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter tables the recommendations and final conclusions of the study. As the study investigated the critical considerations for the SMT in ensuring that their schools are inclusive, study went well with no interruptions and disturbances. The chapter provides these recommendations so that they can be utilised for future study. As there are so many ideas and challenges that came up, the researcher had to sift and prioritise as the findings were analysed. The study was also limited to just one school and 5 participants, so the findings and recommendations cannot be generalised and therefore a study on a wider scale can be recommended. Final conclusion is provided to summarise what can be concluded in this study.

As indicated initially the focus of the study was on the school management team members who are also educators at the school. They have specific role functions and responsibilities that call for them to work as a team in a collaborative effort. Their main focus should be based on leading the school sharing one vision which is to transform it for the betterment of the individual learner's education. This kind of practice is based on and influenced by policies, guidelines and a number of legislative mandates. The researcher has identified that the SMT member are inundated with many of these pieces of legislation such that they tend to loose focus and they (policies) become a barrier themselves.

Using the systems theory, the researcher wanted to find out how the SMT understands IE also to know what they consider critical in the creation of inclusive schools based on their understanding

of the policy. The aim of the study was achieved the responses of the participants provided answers to the three research questions the study was meant to answer.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The researcher's observations and personal professional experience which has influenced the study are clearly supported by the findings that, the SMT's understanding of the policy of IE is limited. Their understanding of IE is very narrow and emphasizes learner deficits which are not what EWP 6 on IE is advocating. Even though the participants agreed that this understanding is shared by all the educators at school, but there were some disagreements amongst them. This is an indication that there still is a need for support and professional development to address the disagreements and eventually have a common understanding. Ntombela (2006) in her findings also suggested that teachers need to be retrained, encouraged, and supported to find new ways of dealing with diversity in the classroom.

They also raised the issue of the effectiveness of the cascade model of training. They indicate that it is failing them because few educators get trained for limited hours but are expected to come back to school and capacitate others and that is not working for them. A compulsory short course on IE is recommended for all educators so that all educators will understand what inclusive education is and its purpose then nobody will expect someone else to be better able to support learners experiencing barriers to learning and development and to be able to identify and address and / or minimize barriers in the system.

It was very evident though that they all agree on the fact that their understanding of IE manifests itself in teaching and learning when they see their learners' scholastic performance. They all agree that all learners must succeed and they even mention that they feel bad when learners do not succeed. But still there are responses that indicate the fact that they become helpless in some other cases where learners are not supported well and therefore do not progress and succeed. It

will be recommended that SMT members and all educators be given thorough training and information on inclusive education. This will assist them to be able to explore other avenues in ensuring that all learners benefit from the education system and are developed holistically to ensure that they contribute to the economy of the country.

The second major finding is the SMT members are aware of how an inclusive school should look like but they don't believe that they can also be an inclusive school as a mainstream school. Their responses started by pushing their understanding of an inclusive school to special schools and the important considerations were for special school but as the responses went on they started to believe that they can also be an inclusive school and have things that they consider important. They mentioned training of all educators, specialised LTSM, special rooms, accessible buildings, parental involvement, district support through specialists and employment of teacher assistance as what they consider important in making their school inclusive. The researcher picked up that their considerations are things that should be provided by the department. Because they lack understanding of IE they did not mention the critical and important considerations that they themselves can foster for their school to be inclusive. One of them is the inclusive culture and ethos that enables all of them to embrace diversity and develop an inclusive environment and many others. This evidence from this study recommends that the district officials should be able to support the SMT so that they identify their own strengths and weakness and be able to embrace the assets that they might have within their school system. One typical example is to ensure that educators who have studied IE are utilised as their resource with regards to teacher development.

The important considerations that they identified as things that the department should be providing to them were believed to be the things that can make their school grow. An implication of that, they mentioned the fact that, their learner enrolment can even increase because parents and the community at large will be aware that their school is provided with so many resources and therefore able to effectively support all learners. These considerations were obviously not fully embraced by all educators as they only mentioned the cases that one educator had recently dealt with successfully. It was powerful though to hear the SMT members mentioning the fact

that they do have an ILST which is a structure that is led by them as the SMT that meets regularly to discuss the cases of these learners with the aim of supporting each other and coming up with intervention strategies. The findings of this study suggests that schools are made aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that they develop inclusive schools so that they become aware of the important things that they need in order to reach that goal.

The third major finding was based on the fact that the school is quite aware of the challenges that they are faced with. These challenges were systemic, societal, pedagogical and intrinsically based. According to these participants they need the department to help and support them so that they minimize these challenges. They responded in a manner that indicates that they are so helpless and have tried their best but they are still not succeeding. They therefore had no strategies put in place to mitigate the challenges that they are faced with as they even mention that there is not enough time for them to support these learners and they would like the department to provide them with teacher assistants. The researcher did pick up that they do a lot of things in trying to address the challenges but may be they (SMT) wanted the department to intervene.

5.3 FINAL CONCLUSION

Even though the study was limited to just one school and only five (5) participants, the researcher emphasised that the findings cannot be generalised to the entire district, province or even country. Of course there is a definite need for another similar study that will be at a wider scale so as to get a broader understanding. There are a number of important changes that need to be made in organizing support for the schools. One of them is to ensure that as the departmental officials from the district we avoid working in silos and work together in a collaborative manner. This will ensure that schools are supported holistically and the responsibility of developing inclusive schools becomes the responsibility of all individual sections of the department depending on their core function.

Training of all educators on inclusive education should not end on advocating the theoretical view that is on EWP 6 but that all sub-directorates present their workshops inclusively by making sure that aspects of barriers are mentioned. It should not only be of mentioning but also

to provide strategies of addressing those barriers. For an example educators are failing to engage all learners including those with scholastic barriers, it means that curriculum advisor should ensure that issues of multi-level teaching, differentiation and cooperative learning are discussed in their training. Another critical example is physical infrastructure accessibility and insufficiency of special rooms like libraries and multi purpose classrooms. Schools need such rooms to enhance teaching and learning as this school even mentioned that learners need relaxed atmosphere to do reading for instance.

It has become obvious that the provision of teacher assistants will enable educators to get support in order to assist learners who are always left behind. This should also be coupled with the availability of specialists like speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, audiologists, counsellors, learners support educators and even psychologists that can work closely with educators in assisting them in order to deal with learner barriers. Obviously this cannot be possible if parental involvement and participation is not prioritized so that the poor and under developed communities can also be supported and developed. Eventually learners will be accommodated in neighbouring schools because resources would have been brought to the communities in schools.

A reasonable approach to tackle these issues could be to establish more of the full service schools in all the ward so that all these resources become available at least for 30 to 35 schools in each ward. Unless the department adopts the strategy that will ensure that all three types of schools in districts, circuits and wards are established and strengthened, schools will always be faced with huge challenges and learners not supported. Taken together these findings support a strong recommendation that the implementation of IE be looked at critically and time frames considered in building an inclusive education system that will intern enable schools to be inclusive.

In conclusion, this study shows that SMTs have some knowledge of IE but are not well informed about how it works. As a result, they hold deficit views. What is critical for the DoE is to ensure

that all staff gets training on what IE is and how it can be implemented in all schools. This is very important if the idea of Education for All is to be achieved.

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