

**THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS' ASSESSED AS INTELLECTUALLY  
SUPERIOR IN A SCHOOL FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.**

*by*

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**DISSERTATION**

**Submitted in fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the degree**

**MASTERS IN EDUCATION**

*in*

**EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

*in the*

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

*At the*

**UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL-EDGEWOOD  
CAMPUS**

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## **Dedication**

The divine grace of god is what steered me during these very trying times and enabled me to complete this thesis promptly.

The continuous support and motivation from my husband whose belief and faith in me motivated me to stay focused on my goals. Without you taking over the household affairs and transporting me to and from lectures, supervision and the research site, writing up this dissertation would have not been possible. Thank you for always listening to and comforting me throughout this process.

To my adorable son, thank you for being so patient and understanding that mummy had to do 'campus work' and had to be left alone for most times in the past two years.

## **Acknowledgements**

My sincerest appreciation is to the following individuals who assisted me with attaining my goal of completing this study.

- ❖ My family who supported me thorough out this endeavor.
  
- ❖ To my supervisor, Dr. Jairam whose excellent guidance, assistance and support enabled me to forge ahead.
  
- ❖ To the principal, therapists, administrative staff, teachers, participants and their parents at the school where this study was carried out. A heartfelt thank you for your kind assistance and willingness to participate in this study.
  
- ❖ To the principal where I am based thank you for your continuous support.
  
- ❖ To my two special friends that I made at university, the encouragement, support and long chats were definitely comforting.

## **ABSTRACT**

In South Africa despite the call for a paradigm shift addressing barriers to learning, whereby the needs of each learner will be incorporated into an inclusive classroom (DOE, 2001), the medical model is still dominant. The learners who experience learning difficulties are still placed in LSEN schools. It is not only learners who have below average intelligence quotient (IQ) test results who are placed in LSEN schools, but also those that have average, above average and superior IQ's (Sheryl, Handler, Watson, & Fierson, 2011). The element of functioning in the intellectually 'superior' range of intelligence is not taken into consideration before placement. The focus is placed on the difficulty. This study therefore looked at the experiences of learners assessed as intellectually 'superior' and who also experienced learning difficulties in an LSEN school and how the school promoted the competence of these learners as indicated by the IQ tests.

This research was a qualitative study which positioned itself within the interpretivist paradigm. The research design was a case study of seven learners within an LSEN school who had 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties. The first technique utilised to generate data was semi-structured interviews. The second was document analysis of the school curriculum and the third was interviewing the therapists.

Purposeful sampling was used. This study's validity was based on trustworthiness. Inductive thematic analysis was utilized to determine the themes of this study. There were seven emergent themes that this study yielded. These were interwoven with the theoretical framework of positive psychology and refuted the relevant literature that was reviewed.

Despite the placement of learners with learning difficulties being rooted in the medical model this study's findings reflect that the learners within this LSEN School do have positive experiences and are in fact exposed a holistic approach to education. It is therefore recommended that with departmental consent those chosen

government mainstream schools follow a similar type of focus to allow learners who experience difficulty to also experience success.

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### **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that “The Experiences of Learners with ‘Superior’ Intellectual Quotients (IQ’s) and Learning Difficulties within a Learners’ for Special Educational Needs (LSEN) School” is my own effort. The sources that I have quoted throughout this text have been accredited in the reference list.

Areshnie Sewraj

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Declaration	vi
Table of contents	vii

### CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Rationale	2
1.3. Focus and purpose of the study	4
1.4. Context of this study	4
1.5. Key Research questions	5
1.6. Theoretical orientation	5
1.7. Methodology	6
1.8. Conclusion and review of the dissertation	6

### CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction	8
2.2. Historical background	9
2.2.1. SSAIS-R	10
2.3. Emotional intelligence	12
2.4. LSEN learners in South Africa	14
2.4.1. Interventions learners receive	
Within the LSEN schools	15
2.5. Curriculum and Assessment Policy	

Statements (CAPS)	18
2.6. The focus on learning difficulties	18
2.7. Conclusion	21

### **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

3.1. Introduction	22
3.2 Introduction and definition of Positive Psychology	23
3.3. Medical deficit model and positive psychology	23
3.4. The three pillars of positive psychology	24
3.5. The application of positive psychology within a school	27
3.6. Positive psychology and talent development	28
3.7. The different 'facets' of positive psychology	29
3.8. The three 'chief' ideas of positive psychology	30
3.9. Positive psychology and its different views	31
3.10. Positive psychology and emotional intelligence	31
3.11. Conclusion	34

### **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

4.1. Introduction	37
4.2. Key Research questions	38
4.3. Qualitative Research	38
4.4. Intepretative Paradigm	39
4.5. Case study	41
4.6. Data generation techniques	42
4.7. Definition and choice of the sample / selection of participants	43

4.8. Phases of data generation	43
4.9. Trustworthiness	44
4.10. Data analysis	45
4.11. Limitations	45
4.12. Ethical considerations	45
4.13. Conclusion	46

## **CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

5.1. Introduction	47
5.2. Thematic analysis	47
5.3. Emergent themes	48
5.3.1. Positive experiences of the learners within the LSEN school	48
5.3.2. The learners' experiences of activities that develops their strengths within the LSEN school	50
5.3.3. The learners' experiences of the development of their character strengths within the LSEN school	51
5.3.4. Learners' experiences of success within the LSEN School	59
5.3.5. Learners' experiences of talent development within The LSEN School	61
5.3.6. Learners' experiences of positive organisational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship within the LSEN School	62
5.3.7. Learners' understandings and experiences of IQ and EQ within the LSEN School	64
5.4. Conclusion	66

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1. Introduction	68
6.2. Main findings	68
6.3. Discussion	70
6.4. Limitations	72
6.5. Recommendations	72
<b>7. REFERENCES</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>8. APPENDICES</b>	
A. Ethical Clearance	79
B. Permission to conduct the study at the school	80
C. Principal's and Governing Body Consent	81
C1. Parent consent	84
C2. Therapist consent	87
C3. Participant consent	90
D. Key Research questions	92
E. Interview questions for the learners	95
F. Interview questions for the therapist	96
G. Caps document analysis	97
H. Transcriptions of interviews	98





# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

As an Occupational Therapist working with learners who have been classified with 'superior intellectual' functioning, categorized by psychometric testing, I have found that despite their above average intellectual abilities, that some of them also experience major learning difficulties that pose as barriers to them achieving success in academia. These learners often do not achieve academic success because their learning difficulties are associated with academia. They battle with their schooling career and their 'superior IQ' is often not enhanced and is forgotten. There is a contingent of these learners with 'superior IQ's' and learning difficulties who are placed in Learners for Special Educational Needs (LSEN) School. I therefore undertook this study to ascertain; what are the experiences of these learners (with 'superior IQ's' and learning difficulties) in an LSEN school? (These experiences are the participation in activities that incorporate their talents, i.e. sports, art, creative activities). Does the school recognize the 'superior IQ' as opposed to the main stream school? Do these learners have experiences that allow their IQ's to develop? Are their learning difficulties accentuated at the expense of their 'superior IQ'

This chapter discusses the rationale, focus and purpose of this study and outlines the research questions that guided this study. The theoretical orientation utilized in this study is then highlighted. This is then followed by a brief explanation of the methodology used in this study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis.

## 1.2 Rationale

In my experience working within a school setting and with learners, I have deduced that there is a common perception amongst those involved in working with learners that if a learner has a 'superior IQ' then that particular learner is meant to excel in academics. This is however not the case, not all learners who have 'superior IQs' excel at school, there is a percentage of learners who despite having a 'superior IQ' present with learning difficulties. How is this possible? This is a common question that is asked by those working with these children. The answer is not simple nor is it complex. Understanding where the learners' learning difficulty stems from is important. The learning difficulty is any factor that impedes the learning process: reading, writing, mathematical, reversal problems or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The learning difficulty may be a mathematical problem, it may be an occupational therapy related problem or it may be a speech and language related problem. In some instances there is more than one problem area. In my experience as an Occupational therapist I have often seen that this problem affects the child's holistic functioning within the classroom and hence learners are often placed in LSEN schools. These learners who present with learning difficulties are assessed psychometrically using intelligence and scholastic tests and then placed in LSEN Schools.

The policy addressing barriers to learning in South Africa has evolved into one that will meet the needs of each learner in an inclusive education and training system (DOE, 2001). This system will meet the diverse learning needs of every learner in a unified community. In my experience working within the Department of Education, despite this call for a paradigm shift the medical deficit model is still the dominant model and learners who experience learning difficulties are still placed in LSEN schools and are not included in the mainstream classroom. The learner that experiences difficulty is segregated from his/her peers and is placed in an alternate school (Rieser, 2012). It is not only learners who have below average intelligence quotient (IQ) test results who are placed in LSEN schools, but also those that have average, above average and 'superior IQs' (Handler & Fierson, 2011; Montgomery, 2010). The placement of these learners in the LSEN school is done purely on the basis of their learning difficulties and their

element of functioning in the superior range of intelligence is not taken into consideration.

This study therefore looks at the experiences of learners assessed as intellectually superior and who also experience learning difficulties in an LSEN school and whether the learners experience a holistic education that remediates not only the learning difficulty but also promotes the strengths of these learners as outlined by the IQ tests. According to website [www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com) holistic by definition is symbolized by the notion that aspects of an entity are closely entwined and explainable just by indication to the complete. In relation to this study holistic approach to learning refers to the whether these learners receive an education that only focuses on their learning difficulties: or does the school incorporate activities that allow them to display their talents and 'superior IQ'? This is in keeping with the definition that aspects of an entity are closely entwined and cannot be looked at separately. The entity in this study is the learner and the aspects constitute the learning difficulty and the 'superior IQ.' Further to this the learners who are placed in these schools are often not aware of their 'superior IQs' but are aware of the learning difficulty that they present with. These learners need to be aware of their superior IQ's as this is a talent that they possess. If they are only aware of their learning difficulty its resultant impact will negatively influence their social and emotional functioning (Wong, Graham, Hoskyn & Berman, 2011).

This study will benefit those learners who present with 'superior IQ's' and learning difficulties with information as the literature review revealed that there is minimal South African research conducted in this area. This study will also benefit the Department of Education policy for learners who present with 'superior IQ's' and learning difficulties. The school that has these types of learners will become more aware of the particular nature of these learners. This will also assist the staff, teachers, therapists who work with these learners to have a better understanding of this phenomenon.

### **1.3 Focus and Purpose of study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the holistic experiences seven of learners assessed as intellectually superior' placed in a school for learners with special educational needs (LSEN) because of their learning difficulties. By exploring the experiences of these learners, the study aimed at investigating whether the school remediates the learning difficulty and as well as promotes the competence of these learners as outlined by the IQ tests. The participants were seven learners assessed as intellectually superior attending an LSEN school. They were chosen from the intermediate phase with a full scale or global IQ of 120-129 which classified them as operating in the 'superior range' of intellectual functioning. These learners had their IQ testing conducted by private practitioners and not by the Department of Education as the Department does not conduct psychometric testing. Assessments of learners who have special needs are carried out by a team based at the school, (DOE, 1996, p. 27).Learners' experiences, the school curriculum, occupational therapy and speech therapy the learners received were explored.

### **1.4 Context of this study**

This study was situated in Durban, South Africa. Learners from in and around the surrounding city attend this school. The school is a short term remedial primary school where the learners spend two to three years and then return to mainstream schools. It caters for learners with specific learning difficulties. These learners had their IQ testing conducted by private practitioners and not by the Department of Education as the Department does not conduct psychometric testing. Assessments of learners who have special needs are carried out by a team based at the school, (DOE, 1996, p.27).The socio-economic context of the learners varies. The learners within the school are not poverty stricken and many come from more affluent backgrounds. The learners that attend this school experience some sort of learning difficulty in with academia and were therefore referred to this school to receive the necessary intervention. The school consists of the pre-primary phase, the foundation (grades one to three) and

intermediate (grades four to seven). The learners that fed this study were between the ages of 10 to 13 years old. Aside from teachers the staff also consist of occupational and speech/language therapists, a psychologist and a social worker. These interventions are slotted into the timetable for those learners that require it.

### **1.5 Key research questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- Do learners classified as ‘intellectually superior’ and with learning difficulties experience a holistic approach to education in a LSEN school?
- What are the implications of this to the learner?

### **1.6 Theoretical Orientation**

The theoretical underpinning of this study is Seligman’s theory of positive psychology. Positive psychology is based on three pillars: Sense of gratification, character strengths and the institution. Positive organizational psychology, positive organizational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship form the three ‘facets’ of positive psychology. There is evidence in the literature (Bar-On, 2011) that positive psychology and emotional intelligence are interrelated. The three main pillars of positive psychology were used to determine whether the learners’ experiences within this LSEN school are positive or not. The three ‘facets’ of this theoretical underpinning assisted me to inspect the school curriculum, timetable and the therapy the learners received and determine whether these allowed for progression and well-being of these learners. The three main ‘ideas’ helped me establish whether the learners viewed themselves as individuals with positive futures or did they succumb to their genetic predispositions and social stigma due to their learning difficulty and placement at a LSEN School.

## **1.7 Methodology**

This study utilised a qualitative methodology which was positioned within the interpretivist paradigm as it explored the experiences of seven learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties in a LSEN school. Semi-structured interviews with the learners, document analysis of the curriculum and interviewing the therapists formed the data generation techniques. The study employed trustworthiness as the validity.

## **1.8 Conclusion and overview of the thesis**

This chapter provided an introduction to the study. The rationale was discussed and the focus and purpose of the study were presented. The research questions were outlined and the theory that framed this study was discussed. It also briefly described the methodology utilized in this study. Finally, this chapter provided an overview of the study.

Chapter Two comprises the literature review. It begins by looking at the fathers of psychometric testing. The review further delved into what constitutes a 'superior IQ' learner in South Africa. This review alludes to the fact that despite the call for the paradigm shift and new forms of assessment such as emotional intelligence and dynamic assessment, psychometric testing is still widely utilized in South Africa and hence learners are still placed into LSEN schools. This review reveals that studies on the experiences of learners classified as intellectually superior in an LSEN school are limited.

Chapter Three comprises the theoretical underpinning of this study, positive psychology which calls for a shift away from the medical deficit model to a more contemporary method which places the emphasis on the positive aspects of human functioning. In relation to this study the positive aspect is the 'superior IQ.' This chapter explores the meaning of the three different pillars which is the underpinning of positive psychology,

the three 'facets; and 'ideas'. The reader is then taken to the manner in which these integral aspects of positive psychology are applied to this study. Emotional intelligence is very closely linked to positive psychology and this chapter accentuates this link.

Chapter Four presents the research design and methodology. The qualitative research design and the interpretivist paradigm utilized in this study are explained. The key research questions that guided this study are clearly outlined followed by a description of the type of sampling used in this study. An explanation of the data generation techniques as well as the trustworthiness of this study is highlighted. The chapter also describes the type of analysis that was used in this study by delving into the definition of thematic analysis which was used to decipher the themes. It then concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this study and the ethical considerations that were undertaken in this study.

Chapter Five is a presentation and analysis of the data. There are seven emergent themes that are analysed and discussed in light of the theoretical framework, positive psychology, and the relevant literature reviewed.

Chapter Six presents the conclusion and the recommendations that this study yielded. The findings of this study are discussed in light of the two research questions that steered this research. The recommendations that emerged from the findings conclude this chapter.

The following chapter reviews related literature pertaining to this study, looking at the history of 'IQ' testing and in particular 'IQ' testing in South Africa. The Senior South African Individual Scale- Revised (SSAISR) which is the most widely used IQ test in South Africa is discussed. This is followed by a review on emotional intelligence as this is seen as the contemporary view to ascertaining a learner's 'level of functioning'. Literature on the LSEN learner in South Africa together with the interventions they receive in South African schools is also reviewed in this chapter. The new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is brought into context so that the reader is

able to understand what interventions the learners in LSEN schools receive. The definition and explanation of the learning difficulty is then clarified to the reader. Further to this the different types of learning difficulties are described so that there is a better understanding when the term learning difficulty is used.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a literature review that begins by delving into the historical background of intelligence, orientating the reader to the fathers of intelligence theories, their work and contribution to intelligence and the development of the intelligence quotient (IQ). The review then moves onto present day controversies with regard to traditional psychometric testing. Psychometric testing and the controversies surrounding the Senior South African Individual Scale Revised (SSAISR) are discussed in great detail. The review then looks at contemporary theories on intelligence testing and in particular emotional intelligence and dynamic assessment as emotional intelligence and dynamic assessment are believed to look at the learner more holistically as compared to the traditional approaches to intelligence.

A review of learners with special educational needs in South Africa forms the next part of the review. This includes the policies that govern learners in special schools and the clauses which do and do not address the holistic and special needs of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) is the national policy for all South African Schools (DOE, 2011). This is also discussed as CAPS is also followed by the learners at special schools (DOE, 2007). The theoretical underpinnings of the admission policy that these learners have to comply with are also discussed and highlighted in this review. The placement of these learners at Special schools is underpinned by the medical model of deficit. This model is looked at in more detail and followed by a discussion of the learning difficulties, its definition and classification as well as the interventions provided by LSEN schools to the learners in this study.

## **2.2 Historical background**

The concept of intelligence is centuries old, however the literature reveals there is still controversy surrounding it (Lagoy, 2012; O'Neil, Swartz, de la Ray, Duncan & Townsend, 2011). A consensus for the definition of intelligence still remains problematic. In early years intelligence was viewed as the ability to think and endeavours were prepared to measure this (O'Neil et al., 2011). This trail of thought yielded psychometric approaches to intelligence, whereby a numerical value was added to an individual's general level of cognitive functioning (Nicholas, 2008, p.166).

There were many psychologists who actively contributed to psychometric testing. Binet's (1890) view was that intelligence should look at higher mental process. Spearman, argued that intelligence consists of a general (g) and a specific (s) factor. The g factor referred to the use of common sense to experiences and the s factor representing the specific capabilities that an individual has which allows him to excel in certain tasks (O'Neil et al., 2011). Thurston contended with the g factor and put forth seven primary mental abilities which were: verbal comprehension, word fluency, inductive reasoning, spatial visualisation, number ability, rote memory and perceptual

speed. He looked at special capacities such as verbal comprehension instead of reasoning.

The Binet-Simon (1908) scale used the idea of mental age (MA) which means that if a child's chronological age is eight, he should be able to complete work set out for an eight year old, this becomes the mental age (Hook, Watts & Cockcroft, 2002). The concept of intellectual quotient was developed by Stern in 1912. His theories on MA were progressed by Wechsler (1939), who through his method of calculation allowed the IQ scores to be categorised in relation to the explanation of intellectual functioning.

Despite all these theories, psychometric testing is controversial. Nicholas (2008, p. 178) argues that psychometric testing is constricted to a set of skills and these comprise: passive verbal understanding, following of instructions, scholastic ability and common sense. The other limitation to psychometric testing is that many are static, this is often a single test completed at one time (O' Neil et al., 2011).

In South Africa psychometric testing still continues to be largely utilised, for this study the Senior South African Individual Scaled Revised (SSAISR) will be discussed as this test was used to assess the intelligence of learners in this study. The SSAISR was developed based on Thurston's (1938) theory of intelligence (van Eeden, 1997).

The tasks in the SSAISR are organised in an ascending direction of difficulty (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2008, p. 126). It has five verbal subtests: vocabulary, comprehension, similarities, number problems, story memory and memory of digits. The four non-verbal subtests comprise of pattern completion, block design, missing parts and form board. There is an optional subtest of coding. These sub tests are in keeping with the mental abilities in Thurston's model.

The SSAISR was standardized for English and Afrikaans speaking South Africans ages seven to 16 years 11 months old. Critics argue that IQ testing is more appropriate for middle and upper socio-economic white individuals (Nicholas, 2008). Seabi (2012) concurs with this and states that traditional tests underrate the capacity of learners who come from deprived backgrounds. Diversity in cultures is an important facet that was

omitted when the psychometric test was developed. South Africa is a multicultural country there are many different races, cultures and languages and due to this there are often problems with IQ testing (Bornman, Sevick&Ronski, 2010, p. 111). Children from different cultures and backgrounds may perceive questions very differently as compared to the manner it is represented in the test. The meaning of being sad or feeling hurt may be perceived differently in different cultures (Pretorius, Hansen, Smit, Joubert, Mosert&Adinolfi, 2011).

There are 11 official languages in South Africa and often these tests are administered in English. It is often not the learners' first language. Pretorius et al., (2011) state that cognitive assessment measures often requires comprehension and literacy skills from the learner; this becomes problematic due to the language barrier. It is therefore recommended that a translator be used. There are three problems with this. The first problem is that it may become difficult when the learner has extreme problems with literacy. The second is that there are specific concepts in English that cannot be translated into any of the languages used in South Africa. The third problem is that learners may be unable to understand the concepts in their home language as they attend an English medium school. Copeland (2005) further indicates that the reality for many South African learners is that they attain their education in the second or third language which results in one of the biggest barriers to learning.

To assist with this problem LeGrange (2009) states that the practitioner should employ a translator who is proficient in both English and the home language of the learner. The other alternative is to test the learner once he she is proficient in English for two years or more (Pretorius et al., 2011).

Despite the criticism, the SSAISR is the chief psychometric test used in South Africa to assess intelligence. Psychometric testing provides information to practitioners on learners who may encounter problems with their education due to lower intellectual abilities (Elbeheri&Everatt, 2009). It also assists with the diagnosis of dyslexia.

The SSAISR allows practitioners to deduce if the learner has problems with reading and whether with remediation of reading for this learner will achieve success with this skill. It

also assists the practitioner with intervention strategies. Clutten (2009) makes reference to the SSAISR comprising normative visual perceptual (VP) data. Occupational therapists work with VP, this test may be an indicator as to whether a child should receive occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

Low scores on the pattern completion block designs, missing parts, form boards and coding is a clear indication that a learner should receive occupational therapy. A low score with block designs indicate that a learner has difficulty with spatial conceptualisation. A learner will present with perceptual and flexibility of thought difficulties if their score on the missing parts is low (Carew, 2009).

A learner who has low scores for the vocabulary, comprehension, story memory and similarities requires speech and language therapy. Vocabulary and comprehension subtests indicate that a learner has daily vocabulary and that his/ her social skills are intact. The similarity subtest indicates that logic, abstract reasoning and verbal concept formation is intact (Carew, 2009, p. 113).

The SSAISR also measures a learner's mathematical ability through number problems and short term auditory memory. Long term memory is also measured using the SSAISR (Carew, 2009).

### **2.3 Emotional intelligence**

Emotional intelligence tests compared to IQ testing are underpinned by a different view on how intelligence should be looked at. It incorporates the emotive and affective involvements of the person by utilising specific tests (Vaivre-Douret, 2011). Bar-On (2010, p. 5) defined emotional intelligence as “ an array of interrelated emotional and social competencies and skills that determine how effectively individuals understand and express themselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, challenges and pressures”.

There is no numerical value assigned to this concept. It is the capacity of people to perceive and practically act on both their emotions and the feelings of other people (Nicolas, 2008). Emotional intelligence is also known as emotional quotient (Nicolas,

2008). Bar-On (2010) concludes through empirical studies that emotional intelligence impacts on human performance, happiness, well-being and the quest for meaning for life. Bar-on (2010) further infers that emotional intelligence included in the educational programme will lead to more learners being better equipped to deal with emotional and social problems that arise.

Apart from the psychometric approach to intelligence, there is the learning- potential theory of intelligence. This sees intelligence as the potential for change rather than as a fixed capacity (O' Neil et al., 2011). This view looks at how learners may benefit from intervention strategies rather than the normative test. This is called dynamic assessment. In summary Seabi (2012) explained dynamic assessment as a pre-test, post-test phase. The learner is given the tests, has remediation and is then retested. This trail of thought rallies that this method excludes the categorization of the learner. In other words before a learner is placed in an LSEN school he has to under go remediation and once it is completed he/she is retested. This theory utilises the learning potential approach of intelligence (O'Neil et al., 2011). It treats intelligence as potential for change, as evidenced by the pre-test, remediation and then the post-test.

Seabi (2012, p. 35) stated that dynamic assessment is an “alternative assessment approach” for learners who come from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. He inferred that this approach would work in South Africa as there is a history of many learners who were disadvantaged due to the past apartheid regime. He further stated that this continues till date and therefore the dynamic assessment approach is recommended.

One of the main characteristics of dynamic assessment is the manner in which change can be structured from within the learner in an organized learning position (Seabi, 2010). This method is utilised as opposed to comparing the learner's performance to that of his peers. Unlike the traditional methods of assessment dynamic assessment provides the teacher with data for effective teaching detailed intervention plans.

Socio-emotional, scholastic and IQ testing are utilised in the pre-test, post-test phase. The same IQ test is not utilised in the post test as it obstructs the validity. This type of testing allows for the learner not to be categorised as in the past prior to intervention.

## **2.4LSEN learners in South Africa**

Learners with special educational needs are governed by Sections 22-25 of the Admissions Policy for Ordinary Public Schools (DOE, 1996). Learners should have the chance to attend ordinary public schools; the schools need to follow a process whereby the Head of Department (HOD) of that section needs to consult with the parents and teacher of that learner to see if he/she may be admitted to that school. This includes adapting the school's facilities to accommodate the learner; if the school is unable to accommodate the learner the HOD of that section must refer the learner to an alternative appropriate school in the province. These learners cannot be refused entry into a school and this process has to be followed.

Working for the Department of Education (DOE), it may be concluded that the DOE has ensured that at national, provincial and district levels there are an obligation to protect the rights of the learners in the LSEN schools. Curriculum monitoring and professional support are areas that are included for monitoring by the different structures.

On the one hand the volume of monitoring and actual input is not stated as this impacts on whether the learners who present with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties receive holistic intervention. On the other hand it is specified that all learners within the LSEN School profit educationally. Further to this it is documented that learners within the special schools receive quality teaching and that learner support occurs at school (DOE, 2007). These statements put the learners in an advantageous place as it would benefit the development of the learners.

The learners must obtain formal instruction on each school day. It is stated that practical application and skills improvement needs to be connected to the acquiring of knowledge. The learner's individual learning needs should be taken into consideration (DOE, 2007). This is an important factor as the learners who present with 'superior' IQs

and learning difficulties will present with individualised needs as their talents may not be in academics but rather in creative activities.

The policy further infers that reworking in instruction and assessment should be taken into consideration. The individual maintenance strategies or support plans are important for these learners who have 'superior IQs' in the LSEN schools as the policy indicates that there should be individualised learning approaches for intellectual expansion and academic success. On the one hand this is an advantage for learners with 'superior IQs' as it implies that the curriculum will provide for the individualised needs of learners, however on the other hand the Department states that a school cannot have intervention that is not stipulated in the National curriculum without the provincial department's approval (DOE, 2007). The areas that these learners are talented in can be added into their curriculum provided that permission is first sought from the provincial department. The policy infers that individualised programmes can be attained for these learners; however the support and the time factor due to logistics may become a hindering factor.

Taken all of the above information into consideration the experiences of the learners with 'superior IQ's' and leaning difficulties experiences might vary. The above may be an indicator that if the curriculum focuses on the learners weakness, which is related to the academic aspects then their experiences will lead to focus only on their weakness. These may have adverse effects on the learners' experiences; if the curriculum focuses on the learners' strengths then this may have a positive effect on the learners' experiences.

The Education White Paper Six (DOE, 2001) has called for a paradigm shift whereby only learners that have moderate to severe barriers to difficulties should be placed in LSEN schools. This is however not the reality. Many learners with mild learning difficulties are placed in LSEN schools.

#### **2.4.1 Interventions learners receive within LSEN schools**

Working for the Department of Education at a LSEN school I can state that the interventions that learners receive within the LSEN schools are occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and remedial sessions. The occupational therapy, speech and language therapy is aimed at remediating the deficits that the learner presents with. Within this school the foundation and intermediate phases occupational therapy consists of sensory motor, gross motor, fine motor (which includes handwriting) and visual perceptual sessions. As an occupational therapist I can sum up visual perception as the foundation of each learning area within the classroom.

Richmond and Holland (2011) stated that the Department of Education sees visual perception assessment as a laborious and uneconomical formal method of assessing learners' output. They further state that the teachers' information on the visual perceptual problems that learners experience within the classroom does not always reflect the actual visual perceptual problem areas that the learners present with. The visual perceptual components that are poor or below average (for the age of the learner) are only discovered once the standardised testing has been conducted. Richmond and Holland (2011) recommend that the teacher checklists should be used as a screening tool for the initial stage of identifying learners with visual perceptual problems, however they argued that standardised testing is very important to determine specific problem areas.

The beginning phases of learning or obtaining these academic capabilities needs paramount growth of basic visual perceptual skills (Richmond and Holland, 2011). They argued that many researchers over the past number of years indicate that visual perceptual difficulties are a contributing factor to learning difficulties. The visual motor integration (which is often the last VP skill to develop) and fine motor impact on neatness and legality of the learner's work. Occupational therapy also assists learners with reversal (of the letters of the alphabet and numbers) problems. Reversal problems are often associated with language deficits. Occupational therapists are trained health care professionals that use specific techniques and activities to assist learners remediate these problems.

All of the above is evidence that occupational therapy is essential for the learners within the LSEN Schools and an assessment is paramount to determine the problem areas. This in turn assists with the remediation of the problem area which in turn assists the child to cope with the learning areas within the classroom. Further to this standardised tests may be used to assist with a diagnosis, to define developmental delays or functional shortfalls together with the medical and educational diagnosis (Richmond& Holland 2011, p. 33). It may also be utilised to report on learners' present performance, the progress made in therapy and the setting and selecting of treatment aims. Being a qualified occupational therapist for a number of years, it is important to clarify that although it is a health profession, therapy is structured to improve the problem areas and at the same time ensure that it is culturally, socially and educationally appropriate for the learners. Another important facet of occupational therapy is that learning or remediation of problem areas occur in an enjoyable manner. This is done through the use of fun activities or worksheets and the manner in which the therapist handles the learner is paramount as these results in progress.

Speech and language therapists assist learners with learning difficulties with expressive and receptive language problems. More specifically they work with phonics, semantic skills, word recognition and auditory processing. Reading is a very important skill that speech and language therapists assist learners with. More specifically they deal with decoding, fluent word recognition, rapid automatic naming and comprehension skills (Handler, Walter&Fierson, 2011, p. 818). Further to this they also work with stuttering, and dyspraxia which form part of developmental difficulties (Lindsay, Dockrell, Desforges,Laws&Peacey, 2010).

Speech and language therapists play a pivotal role in basic education in South Africa, this is through the development of language and literacy (Kathard, Rama, Pascoe, Jordaan, Moonsamy, Wium, du Plessis, Pottas&Khan, 2011, p.818). Language is a chief component of learning, it is imperative for reading and writing, and it therefore becomes a criterion for the different subjects covered within the classroom (Kathard et al., 2011). Language is applied as the channel of learning in all the different subjects within the classroom, and poor language skills has an adverse influence on academia.

Kathard et al., (2011) allude to the fact that international literature points out that learners and teachers that have received speech and language therapy intervention and support have resulted in positive consequences.

Remedial teachers deal with language and mathematics problem areas that learners present with. They assess and assist with the remediation of the problem areas often taking the child back to the basic skills and operations for those subjects.

## **2.5 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)**

The Department of Education has introduced a Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements(CAPS) as the new curriculum that has now being phased in (DOE, 2011). The grade one, three and ten curricula were implemented in 2012. The curricula for grades four, six and eleven are being implemented in 2013 and the curricula for grades seven, nine and twelve will be implemented in 2014 (DOE, 2011). The learners in the LSEN School follow the CAPS as there is no separate curriculum for these learners to follow. In the foundation phase the different subjects are home language, first additional language, and mathematics and life skills. In the intermediate phase the different subjects are home language, first additional language, mathematics, natural sciences and technology, life orientation and social sciences. Social sciences comprise of history and geography.

According to the CAPS document there are specific time allocations for each subject. This is structured into the timetable. This is once again the same format that is followed by the LSEN schools. In light of the above information it may be postulated that the focus is solely on the academics in the LSEN schools and this leads to the focus being placed solely on the learning difficulty and not the strengths of these learners. The learning difficulty may be due to reading, writing, visual perceptual problem, areas which are all the foundation for academics. These learners have to work on these areas within the classroom and hence the focus on the difficulty leaving the learner not receiving holistic intervention.

## **2.6 The focus on learning difficulties**

This focus solely on the learning difficulty or learners with 'superior IQ's' placed in LSEN schools is underpinned by the medical deficit model. This model emphasises the loss of ordinary functions of individuals that present with some form of disability or impairment. They are regarded in a negative light with the emphasis placed on making the person 'normal' (Shifrer, Muller & Callahan, 2011). This results in the individual being labelled and treated differently from able bodied persons.

The foremost outlook of the medical model is for the disabled or the impaired individual being made as normal as possible by a health care professional (Rieser, 2012). In this model the health care professional does not take into account the needs and opinions of the patient but rather administer the treatment he / she deems necessary. The individual's impairment is concentrated to the point that the prerogative to integrate well into society does not occur. Within the school system a learner that has difficulty coping in class is viewed by the medical model view as defective or impaired. The learner is then diagnosed and often labelled. The child needs to undergo a variety of assessments and then needs to be monitored very carefully. The learner is segregated from his/ her peers and requires alternative schooling. The learner's normal requirements are held back (Rieser, 2012).

The learners with 'superior' IQs are placed in LSEN Schools because of their learning difficulty; the superior IQ is not taken into consideration. This placement can be viewed as being framed or influenced by the medical model where the impairment takes precedence and the learner is seen as an inactive onlooker rather than an active contributor to his/ her situation (Reiser, 2012).

The medical model of disability pinpoints the disability within the individual (White, Simpson, Gonda, Ravesloot & Loble, 2010). This thinking yields that the practitioner dealing with the management of this individual's impairment is the only one who is granted authority in the decision making of this individual's health. The individual that presents with the impairment is not given the opportunity to make decisions about his/ her impairments. In the same light the learner's 'superior' IQ is not the pertinent factor

that is taken into consideration for placement at the LSEN School but rather the learning difficulty takes precedence.

Learning difficulties will be discussed as specific learning difficulties in this review. Specific learning difficulties are defined as “an unexplained condition, occurring in a child of average or above average intelligence, characterised by a significant delay in one or more areas of learning” (Selikewitz, 2012, p. 3). Specific learning difficulties are separated into two groups. The first is difficulties with academic skills like reading, writing, spelling, mathematics and language which consist of spelling and comprehension (Selikewitz, 2012, p. 3). The second category is the difficulty in acquiring abilities such as organisation, impulse control, social proficiency and co-ordination of movements (Selikewitz, 2012, p. 3). In specific learning disabilities there might be problems in one or a number of areas. Learning in this context does not only refer to the academic areas and often learning difficulties from the two groups co-exist.

Difficulties in reading, spelling and mathematics loans itself to accurate quantification, and often these tests are administered to the learners and their ability is then measured through a standardised test (Selikewitz, 2012). Despite this accurate quantification this may not be achieved for many other skills (organisation, impulse control) and the identification of these difficulties relies upon the clinical judgement of the practitioner or the experiences of the teacher. It can be contended that this makes testing subjective and it places the validity of the test on the proficiency of the administrator of it, however in the same way that these areas rely on the clinical expertise of the practitioner, migraine and asthma are often correctly diagnosed using the practitioner’s clinical expertise (Selikwtiz, 2012).

Richmond and Holland (2011) alluded that learners who experience academic problems and learning difficulties have lower thanestimatedscores for visual perception, spelling, grammar, spatial relations and numbers. These are based on intelligence testing.

Learning difficulties are most often detected once the child begins academic schooling. Spelling difficulties often accompany reading difficulties and mathematics difficulties accompany language difficulties (Selikwtiz, 2012, p. 8). The participants in this study

have experienced some sort of learning difficulty that has led to problems with their academic progress. Despite having these learning difficulties they also have 'superior IQs' but their learning disability takes precedence and they are placed in an LSEN School.

Dyslexia is another learning difficulty that is very prominent. Dyslexia is referred to as an elementary reading disorder (Handler&Fierson, 2011, p.820). It is a receptive language learning difficulty and the learner has problems with word fluency, decoding, and comprehension skills (Handler&Fierson, 2011, p. 821). There is a misconception that a learner that presents with dyslexia reverses their letters and numbers; this does occur however this is not included into the definition of dyslexia. Learners who present with dyslexia also have different levels of intelligence and are often very creative (Handler&Fierson, 2011, p.821).

Learning difficulties do not only affect the academic skills, it also affects the social and economic areas of the individual's life. Handler and Fierson (2011) concur with the literature stating that learners possess at least average intelligence. They however have trouble processing information which results in productivity. Montgomery (2010) proclaims that learners with superior intellectual functioning also may present with learning difficulties and this results in the learner operating at an average level of functioning as opposed to his /her true potential.

## **2.7 Concluding comments**

This review delved into what constitutes a 'superior IQ' LSEN learner in South Africa. Despite the paradigm shift and the call for inclusive education there is still admittance of learners with mild learning difficulties to LSEN schools. Despite all the controversies and the move towards dynamic assessment and emotional intelligence psychometric testing still continues to be utilised to assist practitioners with intervention strategies. In South Africa the continuous use of the tests has led to the translation of some of the IQ tests to be translated into different languages (Pretorius et al., 2011).

Research on the experiences (positive or negative) of LSEN learners who are classified as operating on the level of a 'superior IQ' in South Africa is extremely limited. The first gap in the literature noted is that there is very limited research carried out on the learner who presents with a superior IQ and learning difficulties. It is always assumed that if a learner presents with a learning difficulty then his/ her IQ range is in the lower limits. It is interesting to note that learners, who present with learning difficulties, have average to above average levels of cognitive functioning.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter was a review of related literature on the area under study. It looked at the fathers of psychological testing and their contribution to psychometric testing and theories. The South African Individual Scale Revised (SSAISR) was looked at in detail. The chapter then looked at contemporary psychological movements such as emotional intelligence and dynamic assessment. The LSEN learner in South African schools and the policies governing the learners and the schools were further investigated. The classifications of learning difficulties formed the next part of the chapter. The literature review concluded with a summary of all the pertinent information.

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of this study, positive psychology, by briefly introducing its founder and the reason behind the movement towards this new trail of thought. In order to understand the urgent call for this trail of thought the medical deficit model is also highlighted as this is the reason for this new trail of thought that focuses on the whole individual rather than on pathology alone.

This chapter then discusses the three pillars of positive psychology on which this study is theoretically underpinned. The three pillars which are experience, individual traits and the institution are explained in great detail both in theory and the manner in which it may be applied to this study. Seligman's (2009) who is the 'founder' of positive psychology and is currently a professor carried out a study utilising positive psychology within a school. The application of positive psychology within the school is then discussed.

The chapter then moves onto positive psychology and the role it plays in talent development. Talent development in this study is the enhancement of the 'superior IQ'. The different 'facets' of positive psychology which are positive organizational psychology, positive organizational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship are discussed in great detail and the manner in which they can be applied to this study.

The three main 'ideas' that Csikszentmihlyi (2009) who has written many scholarly articles on positive psychology, some with Seligman, proposed on positive psychology is also highlighted. The strong link between Positive psychology and Emotional intelligence is further explored and the application of the link between the two components (emotional intelligence and positive psychology) in this study is explained

in greater detail. This chapter concludes by relooking at the importance and the need for the application of positive psychology to learners who have 'superior IQs' but also experience learning difficulties.

### **3.2 Introduction and definition of positive psychology**

Positive Psychology is virtually a 'new' undertaking in psychology. Its main emphasis centers on positive subjects such as happiness and optimism (Biswas-Diener, Linely, Govindji & Woolston, 2011). "Positive psychology is the scientific study of positive experiences and positive individual traits, and institutions that facilitate their development," (Duckworth, Steen & Seligman, 2005, p.260). Martin Seligman the 'initiator' of the positive psychology campaign has claimed that there has been too much attention given to an individual's weaknesses, deficits, shortfalls and diagnosis. He maintained that the emphasis should shift onto promoting holistic human functioning by focusing on positive aspects such as human assets and positive feelings (Chan, 2010). Positive psychology in essence may be looked at as motioning the attention away from the negative onto positive aspects and performances (Seligman, 2003).

### **3.3. Medical deficit model and positive psychology**

The attention on the pathology of the deficit has been the focus of psychology for a long period of time. This trail of thought is theoretically underpinned by the medical deficit model (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Through the lens of the medical model the deficit is placed within the individual and other external factors are not considered. The medical model in operation follows the following method of application: a diagnosis is made, this determines a prognosis and if it is not pleasing then therapy is recommended. This model does not take into consideration an individual's cultural, social and vocational background (Terrel, 1989).

The objective of positive psychology is to produce or to catalyse a transformation in psychology from an emphasis on a fixation with mending the worst things in life to constructing positive potentials (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology follows a totally different trail of thought, whereby the person is chosen as the element

of analysis (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Contrary to the medical model where the emphasis is placed on the deficit that the individual presents with, positive psychology looks at the individual by incorporating every aspect of the individual's life into intervention. Its key emphasis is the well-being of the individual (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Subjective well-being is the scientific word for happiness. It is a chief pillar in positive psychology (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Well-being, happiness, and optimism are the words that are synonymous with positive psychology.

### **3.4. The three Pillars of positive psychology**

Positive psychology is based on three pillars. Chan (2010) described these as experience; an example of experience is gratification that an individual receives. Donaldson and Ko (2010, p.179) describes the first pillar as 'positive subjective experience' and this comprises happiness, well-being, flow, pleasure, hope, optimism and positive emotions'. Related to this study, the first pillar assisted me to analyse whether the experiences that the learners felt within them were gratifying, whether they experienced happiness and pleasure and whether they were given hope that their learning difficulty did not overpower their strengths. Chan (2010) maintains that with regard to talent development the learners should be given tasks that are achievable and allows them the opportunity to develop. This pillar was utilised to analyse whether the learners in this study in the LSEN School were allowed the opportunity to participate in activities that developed their strengths and not only focused on their weak areas.

Chan (2010) stated that if learners are involved in successful activities that result in them experiencing gratification the learner then experiences flow. Flow incorporates the learner's fortes and aptitudes, this in turn allows the learner to magnify and progress his/her expertise. Repeated experiences of flow in talent development activities, which are the strengths of the learners in this study, have extensive appropriate significance that will impact positively on the learner's well-being, health and schooling career despite the learning difficulty.

The second pillar is individual traits. These are seen as character strengths that an individual possesses. Individual traits are also known as positive traits (Donaldson & Ko,

2010, p. 179). These are talents, interests, creativity, wisdom, values, character strengths, meaning, purpose, growth and courage. Character strengths are determined by a detailed assessment of the character strengths that the learner possesses. In total there are 24 distinct character strengths that are across many cultures and that embody collective human strengths.

The 24 character strengths are incorporated below in six widespread qualities. Wisdom and knowledge are intellectual strengths that involve the attainment and the usage of knowledge. These comprise of creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning and perspective (Chan, 2010, p. 8). These are the strengths that should be developed in the learner as this allows that learner to gain and acquire knowledge in a positive manner which leads to the love of school. This becomes an intrinsic motivation and allows that learner the opportunity to perform better. The next character strength is courage these are emotional strengths that comprise of authenticity, bravery, persistence and zest. The enhancement of these skills allows the learners to deal with their shortfalls appropriately and not be overwhelmed with their weaknesses but rather focus on building their courage.

The third character strength is humanity and this involves interpersonal strengths that deal with caring and supporting other individuals. These comprise of kindness, love and social intelligence (Chan, 2010). These skills are important to the learner as this allows for their holistic development. The fourth character strength is justice and this refers to community strengths that allow good community life. These comprise of fairness, leadership and teamwork. These skills are imperative for the learner to possess as this allows easy integration into the society and school. The focus on the learners possessing these strengths and not only on their learning difficulties helps build good community life. Justice is followed by temperance which is comprised of forgiveness, modesty, prudence and self-regulation. Self-regulation can perhaps be seen as the learners' ability to get them onto the right mode to perform. Their ability to forgive and be modest moulds them holistically and does not only focus on the academic skills that need to be enhanced. Temperance is followed by the sixth character strength which is transcendence; these are the strengths that allow alliances with the universe and give

meaning to it. These comprise of gratitude of beauty and superiority, gratitude, humour and spirituality. Chan (2010) further alludes that building all of the above character strengths results in the learner developing his/her skills or talents within the educational environment.

Chan (2010) maintains that wisdom and its components of creativity, curiosity and love of learning allows the learner to develop new knowledge and risk taking skills that will benefit his/ her holistic development. Chan (2010) further explains that open mindedness leads to the learners being given alternatives to view a situation that they are in, and these allow them to face challenges head on. The love of learning which is representative of intrinsic volition allows for the consistent development of building their strengths. Love of learning has to be present as this impacts on overall scholastic performance, currently the learning difficulty is focused on hence the love of learning might be absent or diminished. However, once the focus shifts onto their talents then the love of learning occurs. This in turn allows the learners to benefit from any educational programme that they are involved in and will also assist in the development of social skills.

The third pillar is the institution that enables the first two pillars to work successfully. This pillar supports human success. The learners' experiences within the schools should be gratifying. This relates to the school and the curriculum in this study. The school and the curriculum in this study need to allow the creation of a positive environment, at the same time it needs to be challenging; nurturing and sustaining (Chan, 2010, p. 9). The above characteristics are important as it develops the learner's psychosocial skills which allow them to deal with school related stressors.

The institutions need to allow the learners to be taken out of the mundane routine and placed with healthy challenges that allow them the opportunity to develop their skills and talents and not just accept their learning difficulty. The third pillar allowed me to explore an important question?: Did the learners only have classroom intervention, occupational therapy and speech therapy that focused on the difficulty, or was there an incorporation of activities that enabled the learner's strengths to be enhanced? It allowed me to

explore whether the interventions they experienced were based solely on the medical model or whether they incorporated the development of their strengths as indicated by their IQ tests.

The positive psychology framework also allowed me to interrogate the learners' entry into the LSEN School and the frames of reference that governed school entry or admission. Was the school focusing on only correcting the learning difficulty or were they working holistically with both the learning difficulties as well as the learners' strengths? The focus on both leads to a more holistic approach where the environment at the school enhances the strengths of the learner. If the school ensures that well-being programmes are run then this should endorse abilities and talents that are esteemed by the majority if not all the parents. The programme will then yield quantifiable developments in the learner's well-being and performance. The well-being programme will also enable learners' participation in learning and accomplishment (Seligman, Ernst&Gillham, 2009). The well-being programme has its theoretical underpinning in positive psychology. The escalation of well-being produces escalation in learning, and learning is the conventional aim of education.

### **3.5. The application of positive psychology within a school setting**

Seligman, Ernst&Gillham, (2009) in their work on positive psychology utilised some intervention strategies to facilitate positive psychology within the learner and the institution. They got the learners to record three positive things that occurred daily for a week. Their lists may have been minor occurrences such as giving a correct answer in class. The learners had to write next to that experience what it meant to him or her and how they were able to continue their performance in school so that they received positive feedback (Seligman, Ernst&Gillham, 2009).

To add to the intervention strategies for the implementation of positive psychology at schools, the significance of recognising the character strengths that the learners have in profusion was highlighted. The learners were coached to utilise these strengths at all times, at school, at home, out in the community and when they are with their friends. All

the above was an implementation of positive psychology at a school level and it yielded positive results.

The use of positive psychology escalated learners' evidence of pleasure and participation in school. This escalated strengths which led to learning and involvement in school, this also led to the enhancement of social skills such as empathy, confidence, collaboration and self-control (Seligman, Ernst&Gillham, 2009). These findings illustrate that a positive psychology intervention programme is most beneficial and it would assist learners in identifying strengths and bringing them optimism.

Chan (2010) infers that utilising the three pillars of positive psychology the capabilities and the strengths of the learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties can be enhanced to allow them to prosper and advance. It is a science that deals with human advancement, community thriving and living a healthy life (Biswas-Diener et al., 2010).

### **3.6. Positive psychology and talent development**

Chan (2010) maintains that in positive psychology and talent development the first step is to identify the learner's talents. Subotnik (2000) alludes that a learner's character strength should be acknowledged, intensified and explored as it may be utilised under many circumstances. He alludes to the fact that teachers and parents may suppress their learners' and children's talents and with the use of positive psychology learners' strengths or talents can be developed. This highlights an important point that the parents of the children with 'superior IQs' and the teachers who work with learners with 'superior IQs' need to enhance their children's and learners' strengths.

Parents and teachers should incorporate more innovative and holistic reasoning into the manner in which they approach their children and learners. Instead of pessimistic mood and less attention, critical and analytical thinking should be encouraged to allow holistic development (Seligman, Ernst&Gillham, 2009). Further to this, optimistic mood results in wider attention.

The intellectually 'superior IQ' of learners in this study was a strength that these learners possess; this should be enhanced by giving them the tasks that they will find

achievement in. The learners need be enhanced and developed so that their 'superior IQ' is used as a progressive strength for academic and overall achievement.

### **3.7. The different 'facets' of positive psychology**

Donaldson and Ko, (2010) speak about the different 'facets' of positive psychology. Positive organisational psychology concentrates on vocation and organisational subjects. Positive psychology is applied to progress the efficacy and value of life in these institutes. In this study the institute refers to the school and through the lens of positive psychology, vocation and organisational subjects can be looked at. The organisational subjects in this study referred to the structure of the curriculum, which was the academic timetable. Did the curriculum, therapy and the timetables allow for progression of value of life?

Positive organizational behaviour forms another 'facet' of positive psychology. This denotes the study and presentation of positively focused human source assets and psychological capabilities which can be quantified and successfully fared for an individual's improvement in their work performance. These include hope, optimism, resiliency, self-efficacy and authentic leadership (Donaldson & Ko, 2010, p.179). Learners have to be equipped with all these skills so that their overall performances (within themselves) and within the school are improved.

Positive organisational scholarship is the next 'facet' of positive psychology. Its elementary concern is with positive aftermaths, progressions and the features of institutes and their members. This 'facet' is aimed at understanding what the motivation is at the workplace and the factors that permit institutes to escalate to advanced levels of attainment. It emphasis is on positive dynamics that result in positive factors such as extraordinary individual and structural performance. Positive organisational scholarship comprises of strength, resilience, vitality, trust, organisational virtuousness, positive deviance, extraordinariness and meaning (Donaldson & Ko, 2010, p. 180).

### **3.8. The three 'chiefs ideas' of positive psychology**

Positive psychology also looks at three 'chief ideas'. The first 'idea' is that there should be a different image of what it means to be human. The question of what we as human beings want to achieve in the decades to come is asked when referring to this goal. Csikszentmihalyi (2009, p.205) speaks about 'evolution of consciousness', this basically says that as human beings we have to understand and know ourselves. We have to liberate human kind from 'genetic instructions' and regulation of social constructs. We need to discard these predispositions and be more optimistic for our general well-being.

In relation to this study the first 'chief idea' was applied in this manner. This 'chief idea' assisted me to explore how the learners with the 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties viewed themselves in the years to come. Did they view themselves as an individual with a learning difficulty or did they view themselves as individuals who have 'superior IQs' with the potential for a prosperous future? This chief idea also assisted in exploring whether these learners were equipped with the skills to understand themselves and not viewed themselves as mediocre due to a genetic predisposition to the learning difficulty. Further to this, did they view their future in a negative light because they attended a LSEN school and the stigma that many societies have attached to it? It therefore can be deduced that this 'chief idea' of positive psychology urges the individual to perform introspection and view themselves positively despite certain factors working against them.

The second 'idea' is to accomplish rules for new social contract. This is due to the large inequalities of material wealth and power. Positive psychology can facilitate this different or new social contract by stimulating significant rewards. These rewards should convey human gratitude in a number of methods and not only in materialistic methods (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

The second 'chief idea' of positive psychology looks at material gain which is the driving force. This idea was applied to this study in the following way: did the learners who hailed from the middle to the lower socio- economic backgrounds feel that due to their socio-economic status they were unable to attain a better future because they required wealth to do so. Did they understand that if they focused on the positive aspects this

resulted in them striving to accomplish the best results and hence received significant rewards which may led to them excelling and making a future of the talents that they possessed? (It is important to note that these learners possessed some type of talent and this is the reason for the 'superior IQ').

The third 'idea' is the power of joy (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p.205). These are characteristics that enable life to be more exciting and allows for growth. There are many learners within our schools who are raised in a world where they do not know what it feels like to experience joy. These learners attend school and for them school is an abstract component as they are battling for daily survival. They participate in academic related activities in a robotic manner and this does not enhance their lives as they have no love for school. The environments around them are harsh; some are uninteresting and basically futile (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

Power is something that all oppressed people lack. Were learners within the LSEN schools empowered? Power in this case does not speak about liberation but rather, it referred to their experiences of joy. Did they have the opportunity to work on their strengths because they are good at it, which in turn made them feel that they had power and this led to joy and happiness which is the basis of positive psychology. Due to logistics it is not always possible for the schools to incorporate these activities into the curriculum; however, the question I raised around these activities was: do parents also play an active role in engaging their children in these types of activities, so that they felt that all their efforts were futile and that they lived a mundane existence?

Csikszentmihalyi (2009, p.205) makes mention of an 'ironic paradox', he maintains that human beings are of the perspective that they are improving their lives as it has become more contented and extravagant. This however is contradictory to human kind which is enjoying the very core of life which is happiness.

### **3.9. Positive psychology and its different views**

In summary at the individual order positive psychology deals with optimistic individual qualities. These comprise love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic

sensibility, spirituality, to name a few. The group order looks at positive psychology through community qualities. This also includes the institutions that lead populations to better citizenship, accountability, nurturance, selflessness, politeness, and work ethics (Seligman&Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The assessment for positive psychology sees the practitioner administering extensively utilised and well authenticated surveys for quantifying positive constructs (Biswas-Diener et al., 2010, p.410). Likewise there are numerous positive psychology interventions that have been verified and authenticated to use to elevate happiness. These are utilised by practitioners implementing positive psychology.

Some people stay healthy whereas others succumb to life stressors, this is due to the abilities and the resources that these individuals possess intrinsically. These abilities and resources allow individuals to make sense and meaning of certain occurrences of life experiences (Aspinwall&Tedeschi, 2010). Optimism is the trait that is possessed by the individuals who are able to deal appropriately with their life stressors as they have expectations for positive life consequences.

### **3.10. Positive psychology and emotional intelligence**

Bar-On (2010) through his empirical study highlights the link of positive psychology and emotional intelligence. Currently there is a shift away from the standardised psychometric testing to make way for assessing or determining the learners' emotional intelligence (EQ). The call is now not to determine the IQ but rather the EQ of learners. The two disciplines of psychology intertwine as they both deal with the individual's ability to understand the emotional state of others and the capability for constructive community communication, the regulation and managing of emotions, self-determination and optimism (Bar-On, 2010, p.60). Bar-On (2010) concludes that if success is achieved in bringing up and cultivating emotionally and socially intelligent youth, more operative, dynamic communities and societies will be constructed. This is one of the chief aims of positive psychology (Bar-On, 2010, p. 60). This aim was applied to this study in the following way: do these learners possess the characteristics of emotional intelligence so that they are able to deal with their achievements and

disappointments in a positive manner and continue persevering despite the challenges that they face? Learners who are not equipped with the characteristics of emotional intelligence will be unable to cope in adverse circumstances and will not have an optimistic outlook. Long term resultant effect of this is that dynamic social communities will be not developed.

Bar-On (2010, p. 54) states that emotional intelligence should be deliberated as a fundamental aspect of positive psychology. Positive psychology's core emphasis is happiness. Emotional intelligence has a noteworthy influence on well-being (Bar-On, 2010). Well-being is synonymous with positive psychology. In his study Bar-On (2010) surveyed the connection between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being. The findings yielded that the two are connected. The following three factors explain the connection between the two. The first factor for the reason of subjective well-being is that people were capable of accepting their emotions and themselves more positively. The second factor is that they possess the skill to set individual objectives to augment their capability. The third factor is that they possess the skill to validate their emotional state and place things into the right viewpoint.

Applying the above to the learners in this study assisted me in interrogating whether these learners attained well-being. This will impact negatively on their ability to set goals for themselves and will hence result in low self-confidence. On the other spectrum a learner might be able to focus on his/her strength which is their 'superior IQ'. This leads to the learner viewing himself positively. This leads to positive experiences. They will be able to set goals for themselves focusing on working with their strengths and receiving assistance with their weakness in a positive manner. This then leads to them being emotionally aware of their actions and the consequences of their positive behaviour.

Emotional awareness and emotional expression are the chief constituents of emotional intelligence, whereas optimal adaptation denotes an imperative part of positive psychology. This is regarded as the link between the two (Bar-On, 2010). This link is better explained by the following, emotional intelligence has a substantial influence on human production, happiness, well-being and the pursuit for life's meaning, these are

also the emphasis of positive psychology. Emotional intelligence has a noteworthy influence on the pursuit for life's meaning. An individual has to be positive and optimistic to objectify their capabilities and lead a fruitful and meaningful life (Bar-On, 2010, p. 59). Further to this, emotional intelligence impacts on academic progress as the individual is able to handle stressors, place things into its right view, set and accomplish personal goals and optimism (Bar-On, 2010, p.58). These are also significant components of positive psychology.

Applying the above to learners in this study helped me explore whether these learners see their experiences of placement in an LSEN school negatively which impacts on optimal adaptation. This in turn has an impact on their performance, happiness at the school and their general well-being. Their negative outlook might have a negative impact on their future pursuits and they will feel that they are unable to lead a fruitful and meaningful life. The learner who is able to understand that despite his/ her weakness that he/she has strengths which is the 'superior IQ' results in the learners experience within the school being meaningful. The learner will be able to set out goals for himself and view all his/ her experiences as positive.

### **3.11. Concluding comments**

Why is there a need for positive psychology? The foreground to this approach is prevention (Seligman, 2002, p. 3). Human positive characteristics have been identified as defenses against mental illness. These are optimism, interpersonal abilities, faith, skills, work ethic, hope, honest, perseverance, the capacity for flow and insight (Seligman, 2002, p.3). Positive psychology is important as the emphasis moves away from prevention but the enhancement of human traits.

Positive psychology calls for the shift away from pathology and the deficit medical model. It emphasizes that the learners should not be looked only through the lens of their learning difficulty which places the emphasis on pathology but they need to be also looked at as learners with 'superior IQs. The three main pillars of positive psychology were used extensively to determine if the learners' experiences within the LSEN School are positive or not. The first pillar looked at whether the learners' experiences within the

school are gratifying. The tasks that are given to the learners within the school should enable them to experience gratification. If the tasks are concentrated on their learning difficulties then they will not experience gratification. Their development within the school is an indication of whether the learners experience gratification.

The second pillar which looked at individual traits looked at whether the learners developed some or majority of the 24 character strengths since he/she has been admitted to the school. The question that guided this exploration was: Are the character strengths incorporated into the curriculum? This will determine whether the learners possess the character strengths to help them deal in a positive manner with all that occur to them.

The third pillar, which looked at the curriculum and the school, was used to determine if the school and the curriculum cater for the learners' talents. Are the learners given the opportunity to develop their talents? The talent is seen as the 'superior IQ'. Or is the focus only on their weakness which is the learning difficulty?

Positive psychology has three different 'facets' aside from the three pillars. Positive organizational behavior looks at vocation. Vocation for these learners is being scholars. A scholar within a school has to follow a curriculum and a timetable and more specifically within an LSEN school a therapy schedule. This 'facet' helped me determine whether these allow for the progression and well-being of the learners.

Positive organizational behaviour is the next 'facet' and this looked at whether the learners are aware of traits such as optimism, hope, authentic leadership and if they strive to possess it?

Positive organisational scholarship which is the third 'facet' looked at what the driving force is with all the members within the institution. This study this looked at the dynamics of the learners, teachers and the therapists and what results in progression and what does not result in progression of the learners?

Positive psychology does not only include three chief pillars and three chief 'facets', it also includes three chief 'ideas'. In summary the first chief 'idea', which is relooking at

the image of the human being, was applied to this study in the following way: Do the learners view themselves as individuals who have positive futures? In light of the above they should not allow genetic predispositions or the social stigma of being in an LSEN school prevent their progress.

The second 'idea' which looks at a new social contract infers that the learners must not allow their socio-economic status or their lack of wealth to prevent them from attaining a positive future. Positive psychology here calls for a change of mind set of the learners. In the learners in this study, is this the case?

The third 'idea' which is power, looks at equipping the learners with a voice. The learners should have an opportunity to develop themselves out of the mundane cycle and routine of life. Their parents should play an active role in ensuring that their children are empowered. This will be possible by enhancing their strengths and taking the focus away from the weakness. In the learners in this study, is this the case?

Studies discussed in this chapter have shown that positive psychology and emotional intelligence are closely linked. In order for learners to possess emotional intelligence he/she has to have the different components of positive psychology. The application of the three pillars, 'facets' and 'ideas' of positive psychology will result in the holistic development of the learner, which leads to positive experiences for the learner. Therefore the application of all the different components of positive psychology leads to the well-being of the learner. When applying the above to this study, are the learners in this study developing holistically in the LSEN School?

Positive psychology is gaining momentum in South Africa. In an international study (Donaldson & Ko, 2010) twelve percent was allocated to the use of positive psychology in South Africa. Interestingly enough, majority of the work on positive psychology is from the United States of America.

The following chapter details the research design and methodology chapter. It looks at the research design, detailing the methodology, paradigm design, data generation techniques, sampling procedure, validity and limitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter looked at positive psychology which was the theoretical underpinning of this study. The three pillars,' facets' and 'ideas' of positive psychology were highlighted. The call for the move away from the medical deficit model in psychology was then discussed. The chapter then highlighted the link between positive psychology and emotional intelligence. The theoretical framework chapter concluded with a summary of allthe central factors.

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology chapter that begins by describing the methodology of the study. Qualitative research is described in great detail so that the reader is well orientated to this methodology. The reader is then orientated to the interpretivist paradigm, the ontological and epistemological origins of it. The manner in which this paradigm is relevant and applies to this study forms the next part of the chapter.

The study design utilised a case study of seven learners within an LSEN school who have 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties. This chapter then explains what a case study is and how it applies to this study. A description of the three data generation techniques utilized in this study forms the next part of this chapter. First, the use of semi-structured interviews and its application to this study is discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the document analysis used detailing its application to this study. The third technique which the researcher employed in this study was interviews with the occupational and speech/language therapists. This gave the researcher first-hand information about the therapy programmes. The chapter extends to a discussion of purposeful sampling and the reason that it was employed in this research study followed by the detailing of the data analysis that was used to analyse the data. The trustworthiness which is the 'validity' of the study is explained and the manner in which it was applied to this study is highlighted. The chapter then moves onto the limitations of this study and finally concludes with the outlining of the two research questions that guided this study.

## **4.2 Qualitative Research**

This study is situated within a qualitative research approach. The basis of qualitative research is in social inquiry. It is an inquiry procedure of understanding that discovers a societal or human difficulty. The researcher constructs a holistic depiction from the words, reports and detailed information provided by the participants in their natural surroundings (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). This study looked at the experiences of learners with 'superior IQs' within an LSEN school. The school was looked at as the natural surrounding. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) described qualitative research

as an inquiry process whereby the researchers generate data by interacting face to face with the participants in their setting. Qualitative research looks at the phenomena through the eyes of the participant and understands their perceptions, beliefs, thoughts and social interactions. The meaning that the participants allot to the phenomena is interpreted by the researcher. In this study the researcher interpreted the responses that the participants gave about their experiences that they had within the LSEN School. It was their perceptions, thoughts and beliefs that fed this study.

Qualitative research is based on the assumption that reality has many dimensions, it is communicating and a joint social experience that is deduced by individuals (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In other words reality is a social construct, and people ascribe or add on different meanings to their events. In this study the participants ascribed their experiences within an LSEN school to the researcher. Their perceptions and understanding of their experiences within an LSEN school was what determined their actions, thoughts and feelings about their learning difficulty and their 'superior IQ'.

The aim of qualitative research is to understand the social phenomena from the participant's point of view (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The participants informed the researcher through the means of interviews how they interpreted being placed in an LSEN school despite having a 'superior IQ'. The researcher attained this by evaluating the numerous contexts that the learners were involved in at school. The researcher analysed the curriculum and interviewed the therapists to supplement the information gathered from the learners in the interviews.

Qualitative research may be divided into two classifications. The first type is known as 'natural loci' whereby the observational methods are used. The second is the non-observational techniques whereby interviews and discussions are used (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). This study utilised the second type as learners and therapists were interviewed.

The researcher in qualitative research becomes submerged into the state of affairs and the phenomena being researched (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The researcher in

this study took on a neutral position. It is important to note that the researcher generated data without interfering in the daily occurrences at the school.

### **4.3 Interpretivist Paradigm**

This study was positioned in the interpretivist paradigm. The paradigm looks at the why and how of a study. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on understanding the phenomenon in its context, which was the LSEN School. The paradigm looks at the manner in which the experiences of individuals construct realities that are characteristically personal or subjective (Srivastava&Thomson, 2009). The participants fed this study with the manner in which they viewed or understood their experiences in the LSEN School.

The interpretivist paradigm accents the capability of the person to build significance or meaning to a particular phenomenon. This paradigm has its theoretical underpinning in Hermeneutics and phenomenology. The first is concerned with the interpretation of historical texts (Mack, 2010, p. 7). The latter is concerned with individuals and their personal experiences and the manner in which they perceive their world at the beginning point in societal phenomena (Mack, 2010, p.7). The phenomena in this study looked at learners' experiences within an LSEN School despite having a 'superior IQ'.

The theoretical underpinning of this paradigm looks at the ontological assumption as reality being socially constructed. The reality is seen by numerous individuals and these individuals interpret the occurrences or events in different ways, this leads to manifold viewpoints on an event (Mack, 2010). The individual adds his/her own meaning to an event. In this study the participants added their own understanding as to how they viewed their experiences within an LSEN School. The incident was distinct and it cannot be generalised. The epistemological underpinning is that knowledge is obtained via means of a stratagem that esteems the dissimilarity between individuals and the entities of natural sciences to hold the subjective significance of social acts (Mack, 2010). The key belief is that research cannot be objectively viewed from an external stance. The

researcher needs to position him/herself internally to observe the phenomena through the lens of the participants. The researcher in this paradigm has to understand, enlighten and decipher the social reality of the different participants. The researcher in this study interviewed the learners and the therapists.

The interpretivist paradigm has a few limitations. The first is that it vacates scientific processes of confirmations, hence the outcomes cannot be generalised to other events. The ontological assumption is subjective and not objective, however Mack, (2010) argues that researchers who position themselves within the interpretivist paradigm take an objective standpoint when they analyse the data that was generated. He further states that the researcher braces their suppositions and they interrogate the data so that it notifies them about what is occurring in the environment that the study was conducted in. This is opposed to the researchers' notions about what has occurred. The researcher positioned herself to explore the direct experience of the learners assessed as intellectually superior and experiencing learning difficulties in an LSEN School.

#### **4.4 Case Study**

This study was a case study of seven learners within an LSEN school. The case may be a programme (McMillan&Schumacher, 2006). The researcher looked at learners' experiences and the curriculum of the school including interviewing the therapists. Case studies provide descriptive, analytical and realistic summaries of the study(McMillan&Schumacher, 2006). Case study designs are extensively acknowledged and utilised (Andrade, 2009, p. 42). The case study design's chief focus is on a single phenomenon. The researcher studies this phenomenon in great detail irrespective of the locations and the number of participants the study contained. This research looked at one research site and only seven participants. The single phenomenon in this study represented their experiences in an LSEN school. A case study research calls for in-detail, minute and distinguishing groups. This study involved only seven participants. A case study design is applicable for exploratory and discovery research

(McMillan&Schumacher, 2006). The exploratory research reviews a matter about which there has been very little to no research prior to it. This type of study has had minimal research conducted on it. Certain case study design studies offer insight to an abstract idea from the participants' point of view where as other case studies connect the participants' viewpoints to social sciences.

Case study designs in qualitative research deliver comprehensive portrayals and investigations of certain practices, procedures or occurrences. It does not advance itself to universal or predicative research. It is concerned with an explicit phenomena and a complete understanding of it (Dooley, 2002). In this study the experiences of learners with 'superior IQs' within the LSEN School was the phenomena that was researched. This research also looked at these learners assessed as intellectually superior bounded in time and place. The place was the LSEN School.

Case studies may utilise different data generation or collection techniques (Dooley, 2002). In this study the researcher interviewed the seven learners, interviewed the therapists and conducted a document analysis of the curriculum. Case study research's sole aim is to produce novel information or knowledge; this is done through a method of scholarly analysis and investigation (Dooley, 2002). In so keeping this study's aim was to generate new knowledge on learners' experiences in an LSEN school, however this study had an additional factor, although the participants in this study had learning difficulties they also presented with 'superior IQs'. The variable of 'superior IQs' assisted this study with the generation of data involving a novel phenomenon.

#### **4.5 Key research questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- Do learners classified as 'intellectually superior' and with learning difficulties experience a holistic approach to education in an LSEN school?
- What are the implications of these experiences to the learner?

Research questions	Do learners classified as 'intellectually superior' and with learning difficulties experience a holistic approach to education in an LSEN school?
Why was the data being generated?	To explore if the curriculum within the school catered for the holistic needs of these learners. Is the focus at the school only on the learning difficulty? Did the school management consider the 'intellectually superior' IQ when drawing up the curriculum and programmes (timetables)?
What was the research strategy?	Learners were interviewed. Documentation was viewed; this was the CAPS curriculum. This included policies of the grades five, six and seven curriculum (as the learners were from these grades) and interviewing the therapists. The curriculum and school timetable documents were analysed to obtain an in depth perspective of the programmes that were run at the school to gather if the learners received a holistic education. Further to this the researcher obtained data through interviewing the therapists.
Who (or what) were sources of the data?	The curriculum, the policies of the grades that the learners were in. Interviewing the learners and therapists also formed part of the sources of data.
How many of the data sources were accessed?	There were seven main sources which were the learners, the CAPS document and the therapists who took the learners for therapy also formed a part of the data sources.

Where was the data generated?	At the school, as these involved interviewing learners, viewing the documentation, which was the policies for the curriculum and interviewing the therapist.
How often was data generated?	Data was generated on five occasions.
How was the data generated?	Interviewing learners and document analysis of the policies, which was the CAPS document. It also included interviewing the therapists.
Justify this plan for data collection	Document analyses of the CAPS document provided information to the researcher as to whether the curriculum catered for the holistic needs of the learners. These are the policies of the school which are incorporated into the timetable. It can be viewed as a more objective tool to gather information. Interviewing learners gave a voice to learners on how they experience schooling at the LSEN school. Interviewing the therapists provided the researcher with in-depth information on what occurred within occupational and speech and language therapy.

Question two:

Research question	What are the implications of this to the learner? (this question leads on from question one).
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Why was the data being collected?	To obtain the learners experiences in an LSEN School, whether their learning difficulties and strengths were catered for and what were the implications of this for these learners.
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What was the research strategy?	Semi-structured. It is an interactive research. The researcher obtained the participants' perspectives through in depth interviews.
Who (or what) were the sources of data?	Seven learners in an LSEN school who were assessed as intellectually superior and who also experienced learning difficulties.
How many of the data sources were accessed?	Seven learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties.
Where was the data generated?	At the school, in the therapy departments
How often was data generated	On five occasions
How was data generated?	Interviews
Justify this plan of data generation.	The learners were rich data sources to inform the study about their experiences within the LSEN school.

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#### 4.6 Data generation techniques utilised

An interview schedule was used to collect data. The schedule included all the questions that the researcher wanted to ask. The questions listed in this interview schedule were directly related to the aims of the study. These questions were asked with appropriate probing. The interview took the form of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the seven participants. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to gain 'rich and in-depth experiential accounts from individuals' (Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2004, p.1). The researcher hence utilised this method to generate data on the learners' experiences within the LSEN schools. Semi-structured interviews are set out or asked to permit the participants to respond (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The questions were open-ended; however the questions were linked to the research focus. An example of an open-ended question from this study was: Can you tell me about your experiences in this school?

Document analysis of the CAPS curriculum that the learners followed was also conducted. Document analysis delivers acumen on the background history and information on the research group (Watkins, 2012). Watkins (2012) described a chief factor of document analysis which is its time effectiveness in that there are no planned meetings with the research participants. She however states that the disadvantage of document analysis is that if information is missing it becomes it results in gaps with the findings as it affects the interpretation of the results. The researcher also interviewed the therapists.

#### **4.7 Definition and choice of the sample/ selection of participants**

This study employed purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is conducted to escalate the efficacy of information gathered from small samples. In this study the researcher ensured that the participants were 'information-rich key informants' (McMillan et al., 2006, p.319). The participants that fed this study were seven learners who had 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties. They were between the ages of 10 to 13 years old. These participants offered their first hand experiences to the study as the researcher investigated the phenomenon of the experiences of learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties.

The learners, curriculum and therapists were rich key informants. The learners were chosen as they are knowledgeable about their experiences in an LSEN School. The fact that this research only looked at seven participants can be looked at as generating in depth insight on the topic.

#### **4.8 Phases of data generation**

Phase one was to gain permission from the principal to conduct the research at the site. The second phase was the data generation phase, whereby the researcher built rapport with the participants. In Phase three, the researcher heard and saw what was occurring and conducted the interviews. At this stage the researcher also analysed the grade

curriculum, and interviewed the therapists. Phase four was closing data generation having asked all the pertinent questions and reviewed all the important documentation.

#### **4.9 Validity and reliability**

This study's validity was trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is explained in terms of Guba's (1981) model of trustworthiness. Krefting (1991) describes trustworthiness according to Guba's model as comprising of four entities. The first is truth value. This refers to the researcher's satisfaction with the truth he/she obtains from the study. In qualitative research the truth is generally gathered from the investigation of human experiences and this includes the manner in which the participants live and believe their experiences to be. This leads to the credibility of the study. This study ensured truth value by interviewing the participants and obtaining their in-depth views, beliefs and perceptions on their experiences within the LSEN School. The second entity pertains to applicability which is the point to which the outcomes of the study may be applied to other contexts and groups of people. This study may not be applied to other contexts and settings as it has certain unique features. The unique features are the 'superior IQ' with the learning difficulty and the fact that this study occurred in an LSEN school. The third entity refers to the consistency of data. In qualitative research consistency refers to learning more from the participants and not the control the researcher has over them. It accentuates the exclusivity of the situation the person is in so that the distinction in experience is pursued rather than identical repetition of a study. In my study this entity added to the trustworthiness as I learned from the participants about their experiences within the school and what the implications are to them. The fourth entity is neutrality. This is when the findings from the research are obtained solely from the participants. In my research only the participants who were the learners with 'intellectually superior' IQs provided information on their experiences within the school.

The credibility of the study was obtained by triangulation of data. Triangulation of data was utilised using semi-structured interviews, document analysis of the curriculum and interviewing the therapists. I utilised different sources, this type of triangulation is

perhaps the most popular as it is the most easiest to implement (Guion, Diehl,&McDonald, 2011).

#### **4.10 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was utilized in this study. It is a broadly utilised qualitative analytic technique in psychology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of data analysis is flexible. Inductive thematic analysis was utilised as this study sought to understand the experiences of learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties within an LSEN School. The study in other words sought to understand the learners' daily experiences of reality. This type of analysis may be utilised with any theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study's theoretical underpinning was positive psychology. There were seven emergent themes in this study which are analysed and discussed in extreme detail in chapter five of this thesis.

#### **4.11 Limitations of this study**

This study is limited to learners who have superior IQs ranging from 120-129 on the global scale. The research findings cannot be generalised to all LSEN schools in KwaZulu-Natal, as the findings are only representative of this particular school. This then leads to the limitation of the second entity of trustworthiness which is applicability.

#### **4.12 Ethical considerations**

The participants in my research were learners who are under the age of 18 years old. I had to firstly obtain informed consent from the parents. The informed consent forms stipulated that the learners' names will not be disclosed and pseudonyms will be used. The school and their actual grades were not disclosed as this assisted with maintaining anonymity. The settings and the participants were camouflaged to look like numerous

altered places. The participants were also informed at the beginning of the research that they may pull out of the study if they were unhappy to participate and if they were prejudiced in any way.

The researcher was aware of the learners' emotions and feelings. She encouraged open discussions if they were unhappy or uncomfortable with any aspect of the interview process.

#### **4.13 Concluding comments**

This study employed a qualitative methodology within an interpretivist paradigm as it was exploring a phenomenon. The phenomenon was the experiences of learners with 'superior IQs' with special educational needs within an LSEN School. The study was a case study of seven learners within the LSEN School. Semi-structured interviews with the learners, document analysis of the curriculum and interviewing the therapists formed the methods of data generation.

The validity of the study was trustworthiness and the manner in which it was applied to the study was explained. The limitations that the researcher encountered in this research were then explained. This chapter concluded by looking at the ethical considerations of this study. The following chapter presents the data and analysis. This chapter delves into the definition of thematic analysis which was adopted to decipher the themes. There were seven emergent themes and these are explained in great length in the following chapter. The emergent themes are linked to the relevant literature reviewed and the theoretical underpinning of this study, positive psychology.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter focused on the research design and methodology that this study adopted. The chapter orientated the reader to the qualitative methodology which was utilized. This study positioned itself within the interpretivist paradigm and applied a case study research design, which were explained in depth. The data generation techniques comprising of semi-structured interviews, document analysis of the school curriculum and interviews with the therapists were also discussed. The chapter concluded with the two research questions.

This chapter presents the research data compartmentalizing the data generated using emergent themes. There were seven pertinent themes that this study yielded. The themes were then discussed in the light of relevant literature and the theoretical framework, positive psychology, which underpinned this study. This chapter concludes with a summary of all the pertinent data discussed in this chapter.

## **5.2 Thematic analysis**

Braun and Clarke (2006) infer that thematic analysis is often an existing and supplementary approach to explore data. It is a technique for classification and investigation of themes from the data generated. It allows for the in depth descriptions of the data. This study therefore employed this approach to describe the data. Thematic analysis results in the configuration of themes. Themes encapsulate pertinent factors in response to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This research entailed an inductive thematic analysis. This type of thematic analysis provides in depth and rich descriptions of all the data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The emergent themes and the explanation of these themes are not quantifiable measures but rather the salient points that develop out of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data sets that were analysed to uncover the themes were the interviews with the learners, the interviews with the therapists and the analysis of the curriculum. The first step of the thematic analysis entailed going over the data produced. This included familiarisation with the CAPS documents, the responses of the learners and the responses of the therapists from the interviews conducted with them. The second step entailed the researcher transcribing the data produced from the CAPS document, interviews with the learners and the therapists. Step three was organising the data from the learners, therapists and the CAPS document into meaningful groups. Step four formed the descriptions of the emergent themes and the analysis of the data in the light of the theory that underpinned this study and the literature review.

In this study seven themes emerged. They were: Positive experiences of learners within the LSEN School; the learners' experiences of activities that develop their strengths; the learners' experiences of the development of their character strengths; learners' experiences of success; learners' experiences of talent development; learners' experiences of positive organisational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship and learners' understandings and experiences of IQ and EQ.

### **5.3 Emerging Themes**

#### **5.3.1 Positive experiences of learners within the LSEN School**

As illustrated by the participants' responses below many of them commented that they have had positive experiences within this school.

Participant A: *"It is fun at this school. We had lots of hard work in grade 6, I was in the 'A' class and had lots more work, that we went down later to market day than others. Mr. X gives us free time if we worked hard enough. Classes are smaller and I like that."*

Participant B stated: *"It's been very nice here, we done OT, Speech therapy, lots of sport for you to take on. We get loaded with work, but it's easy to handle. If you are troubled or scared you can always go to a teacher. Teachers are kind, if you are scared go to them. Therapists are very kind."*

Participant C stated: *"My experiences have been very positive. I've only been bullied once. The teachers are very understanding. If you have any questions about tests or anything about the subjects they help you and make you understand."*

Participant D stated: *"It's been very a nice experience at this school. Umh I've made lots of new friends, most of them are really kind. And I like my teacher a lot."*

Participant E was initially thoughtful about her experiences and she then replied: *“Um from the first day. It was scary at first and then as I stayed here longer I realized this is actually a very nice school. I have lots of friends and yeh.”*

Participant F asked for clarity on the question, the researcher provided another simplified word for experiences, and the response was: *“Um okay, It’s fun”*.

Participant G stated: *“That’s a tough one because I don’t remember”. I don’t really like it a lot. Um like it, I like it a lot.”*

The responses that were obtained by the participants indicated that they had positive experiences within this school. The recurring factors that contributed to their positive experiences were numerous. Some of the participants concluded that the school was fun. The fact that they have established many friendships which indicates a sense of belonging have also contributed to their positive experiences. The kindness and the in depth explanation of the schoolwork by their teachers further resulted in a positive experience. The smaller class was another determining factor which resulted in positive experience of the participants.

When looking at the experiences of these learners in the LSEN School in the light of the theoretical underpinning of this study which is positive psychology the participants’ responses reflect experiences of human assets and positive feelings (Chan, 2010). The kindness of the teachers has allowed them to experience positive feelings which in turn resulted in their positive experiences at this school. Positive psychology is based on three pillars (Chan, 2010). The first pillar is the gratification that an individual receives. Learners in this study expressed gratifying experiences within the school, as they have experienced happiness and pleasure at this school.

This is in keeping with Sections 22-25 of the South African schools act (DOE, 1996) that learners within the South African special schools receive quality teaching and that learner support occurs at school. Holland and Richmond (2011) in a study carried out at the school in this study allude to the fact that learners within the LSEN schools receive individualised care. Speech/language therapy received by learners plays a vital role in

the development of language and literacy in South Africa (Kathard, Rama, Pasoce, Jordaan, Moonsamy, Wium, du Plessis, Pottas&Khan, 2011, p.818). Kathard et al. (2011) claim that learners who have received speech and language intervention and support experience positive results and this in turn has positively influenced their experiences.

### **5.3.2 The learners' experiences of activities that develop their strengths**

The learners in this study are afforded the opportunity to participate in activities that develop not only their weak areas which is the learning difficulty but also their strengths. The learners were asked by the researcher if they participate in any activities that they are good at in this school? Below are the responses:

Participant A: *"Yes. I love swimming and I also like running so I do swimming and running. Swimming is everyday in the first and fourth term, except Friday and running is everyday in the second and third term.*

Participant B: *"Yes. I participated in cross country, tag, we also did expedition. I like art. The art teacher took my art."*

Participant C: *"Yes. I participate in percussion. I find it very interesting and it helps me with my rhythm. I love maths. I just finished a maths test which I got 90 percent for in it. I like logical subjects. History as well, but I am not very good at it, I am not good in English, not logical for me."*

Participant D: *"I like choir I am good at it, hockey and netball as well. I like it because all my friends at school are with me all the time."*

Participant E: *"Yes." Well I like netball hockey and piano."*

Participant F: *"I quite like swimming and I like Judo except I can't complete my homework."*

Participant G *“Yes.” I take part in Judo and my next belt and I'M really good at it and my next belt will be green.”*

In keeping with the first pillar of positive psychology Chan (2010) stated that if learners are involved in successful activities they then experience flow. Flow incorporates the learner's forte and aptitudes; these learners have experienced flow as they have participated in art and sporting activities which have resulted in talent development as evidenced by participant G who inferred that he will move onto the next level in the sport he is participating in. These strengths of the learners in this study have impacted positively on the learner's well-being, health and schooling career despite the learning difficulty. The areas that these learners are talented in may be added into their curriculum provided that permission is first sought from the provincial department (DOE, 2007). The researcher reviewed the school timetable and it indicated that most of the activities that enhance the learners' strengths are within the school timetable and some occurred before or after the school day.

### **5.3.3 The learners' experiences of the development of their character strengths**

Data was also generated by interviewing the therapists who carried out occupational, speech and language therapy with the learners. There were some therapists who had exited the school and this resulted in the researcher reviewing the learners' therapy files. The information yielded by this technique indicated that many learners were in fact discharged from both occupational therapy (OT) and speech/ language therapy. This indicates that their problem areas many of which may have lead or exacerbated the learning difficulty have been remediated.

The responses and remarks about each participant from occupational, speech/language therapists and audiologists' are reflected below:

Participant A: *“Katie's\* has had hand writing difficulties poor letter closure, positioning on the lines was erratic and her sizing of letters were erratic. VMI, motor co-ordination*

*was below average. She received individual class based OT once a week. She was a pleasure to work with, sweet co-operative young lady who tried her best in therapy.”* According to the remarks in the file Katie was discharged from OT in 2012.

*“Katie was seen for therapy not because she has deficits but because the therapy could benefit her. The way she is performing she does not need therapy anymore. She is a strong forceful personality, confident she does not like to miss out. She is flying and she knows that. She is very organised. The grades seven’s all love and support each other. She fits in quite well and they all know she is smart. The class that she is in they love their teacher, they wait to go back to class. His teaching is different.”*

Participant B: *“She is currently not receiving OT, she was discharged after re-assessment at the beginning of 2013. Gabby\* was seen for handwriting closure and not writing on the line inconsistencies. She has had spelling and reading difficulties. She also received class based therapy for postural control, visual form constancy and prone extension. Mum was keen on a handwriting programme as she was not formally taught how to write. She was reassessed in February 2013 she was able to maintain prone extension, the positioning of the letters were better, the visual form constancy went from 8 to 11. Gabby is a lovely child, she copes so well. She is so determined, so polite. Nice sense of humour, participates so nicely, willing to do her best”*

*“Gabby received speech therapy in 2012. She had very specific auditory perceptual problems, very specific to synthesis and analysis. Phonological awareness whereby she had to listen to the words and manipulate it at an auditory level cat has three sounds, c a and t. Then moved onto the more complicated words like table. This is all linked to spelling and reading skills the auditory skills. Gabby progressed very well and quite quickly. For a learner to have only a year of therapy its very nice progress.”*

Participant C: *“Samantha\* was assessed in February 2012. At the time of assessment she had very few gross motor and fine motor problem areas. With gross motor her endurance for desk top activities were decreased, with fine motor skills her scissor grip and cutting control was decreased. She presented with a fluctuating pencil grip and she applied excessive pencil pressure. Her writing speed was slightly below average. She*

*had difficulty with her letter closure in the handwriting, and very slight sequencing difference on a fine motor level. Her visual discrimination and visual figure ground were below average. On reassessment in October 2012 her Visual discrimination was 12 and her figure ground was 19. She was an absolute star in therapy. She did so well in therapy. She coped incredibly well. She is a diligent child .Her endurance improved, positioning practically and the positioning of her fingers which made her pencil grip improve. She was intelligent enough to do it on her own. She managed well with the perceptual tasks even though she had a score of seven for the two. She did have the tendency to be impulsive at times, sometimes she did drift and was fidgety.”*

*Samantha\* received classroom therapy, she has memory strategies in the classroom, she was very quiet in the classroom. She used to contribute. She is enthusiastic, she is quite but you can see that she has this pent up energy. She was obviously not battling, yes she is coping very well. She is tenacious, competitive. At times she knows that she is smart. She presented with a CAPD, central auditory processing disorder.”*

*Participant D: “Alison\* had two years of OT and was discharged. In grade four she had OT in the class. In the class she participated well. Her approach to tasks were disorganised. Her written work was not great. She wrote all over the page as opposed to columns. Her organisation, thoughts to a plan and making the plan were decreased. Her VP, Gross motor and fine motor were addressed prior to discharge. She enjoyed therapy. The one on one work. She got on well with her peers most of the time.”*

*“Alison receives small group speech therapy for analysis and synthesis, which are the auditory skills for spelling, reading and writing and she attended therapy with me for the whole of this year. We just started working on auditory skills, she often found difficulty with sequencing. Um sequencing her responses she takes, she has to work systematically, steps which to follow, use visual markers like tokens to try help her, where we’ve started off with simple things like cat, for e.g. one token represents one sound. One for C, one for a and one for t and then show her how to take off the first sound, take off the last sound. How to add a sound. We worked a lot like that, now we*

are up to the integrated level which is the written level. She is now completing worksheets where she is given a word um normally four letter words, leaf for e.g. and she has to take one letter out. She used the trass charts for spelling choices. Letter tiles into the group as well. Letter tiles to give tactile feel. She has improved, however there is the persisting difficulty with recognising real words as opposed to non sense words. She has poor memory recall. She does not remember site words, visual patterns. She seems to be learning, she needs that one on one. ”

“Alison was very needy. She would lose her place, she was disorganised. She had attention seeking behaviour. She had APD problems. She was assessed this year as average. The class is very supporting and they accept each other. She has mild hearing loss on both ears.”

Participant E: “Thomas was reassessed in September 2012 and he was discharged. Such a lovely child, quite alternate especially auditory processing sensitivities. Perceptual was all fine, general was above average. He had very slightly decreased postural endurance, shoulder stability and sequencing. Fine motor his handwriting was variable depending on the effort applied. There were probable differences in auditory sensory function. In practice it was much more probable. Sensory avoidable behaviour, sensory overwhelming and sensory behaviours. His a very pick eater, specific diet. He responded well to proprioceptive input. Such a divine child. I had such a soft spot for him. Such a divine mum. Responded well in therapy. More from the modulation side he responded well but the endurance remained quite a big area of difficulty. The sensory processing impacted on it more. Sensory diet was important in the class, he needed it more he just needed movement.”

“I saw Thomas in 2012, seen for six months for individual therapy for auditory discrimination. Identifying specific sounds mistaken cloth and clove th and ve so close. He had very specific ones, he was assessed and after six months within the normal range. He was discharged from individual therapy. CAPD screening assessment in 2012, few areas of difficulty so classroom therapy this year. He had difficulty with muffled voices so if the teacher turns around and writes on the chalkboard and gives an

*instruction, he wouldn't be able to understand the message properly. We worked on closure abilities the message is disturbed, interrupted, encourage them to close. Thomas struggles to listen if there are big noises, struggles to focus on what the teacher or the therapist is saying and to shut out distractions. He is on medication however he continues to be very distracted at times. He gets bored quite easily with repetition tasks. He loves to be challenged. He answers thoughtfully and deeply. He enjoys the language sessions. Language is his strength. Pleasant to work with. He can misunderstand the instructions due to distractions, he has to double check the instructions."*

*Participant F: "Joshua\* is very epileptic. He has lots of fits. It is under control at the moment he blanks out in class. He is on a huge amount of medication. Very intelligent. He had no problem areas so he was discharged in April. I started seeing him again as the teacher stated that there are problem areas again. His VP is a scatter. Spatial Relations 15, visual form constancy 18, visual memory 9, no actual VP difficulties. Gross motor his postural endurance and motor control is decreased. He lies on the desk. Fine motor he presses hard on the pencil. He has midline crossing problems. With his handwriting placement on the line, spacing and placing was decreased. He was reassessed in July. He is very in to gadgets and he knows how they all work. He is very in compliant with homework. He is quite confident. He knows where his difficulties are. He is very intelligent in the way he knows what's going on. He is a bit lazy."*

*"He is very interesting, superior. I will have to call his name, Joshua, Joshua and he will be seizing, he will sit still and frozen with glazed eyes. I will click my fingers and he then carries on with what he was doing. He has no imprint on the brain of what happened. When I ask him what happened, he replies "I don't know." In the classroom for story grammar I use an FM system so that they receive the auditory input at the optimal level he is fidgety and moving. I am patient but I have to firm. He does come across as socially inappropriate, he now makes an effort, regulating himself, he is starting to read the non verbal's. He is not sensitive to others. He knows that he is superior to others. His writing is poor, untidy he takes no pride in it, no intrinsic motivation. I give him visual input as it is concrete. I write things like well done and quicker. It is very specific. He comes in, sits down, writes his work and then states he is*

*finished. I want to always be a good chapter in his life, so I am firm with him and I give him that sense of security. He understands all the tasks.”*

*Participant G: “Leah had no problem areas on assessment. Her gross motor intact, fine motor intact, handwriting accurate neat and correct speed. Her VP was mostly above average or within the average range. VMI was above average. She arrived without an OT assessment. I saw her for VP activities and then assessed her and she had no problem areas. OT was terminated. She coped really well. Occasionally she had some difficulties she confused right and left but very occasionally. I knew that she was strong.”*

*“One of her main problems is spelling and integrated synthesis and analysis with her. Her memory is strong. She is a very bright child. She is average on most areas. Reasoning was low average working on that. Analysis and synthesis was below average. She has come a long way. She still has difficulties. She applies the strategies taught to her. She is forgetful. She forgets her speech book often. Her theory is very good. She battles with the application. She takes therapy well. She is a passive sort of girl, she is very respectful. In the CPD group she is talkative. Alone she is quiet and submissive. I give her verbal feedback. She gets a star after every session. She is collecting them on her ruler. I didn’t think the star will actually matter.”*

As evidenced by the therapists’ responses above, these learners have gained character strengths which form the second pillar of the theoretical underpinning of this study. There are six widespread qualities out of 24 character strengths (Chan, 2010 p. 8). Wisdom and knowledge are the first wide spread skills and many of the learners were able to apply the techniques and skills acquired in therapy into their future sessions so that when many of them were re-assessed they did not require individual or group therapy. The learners received visual perceptual input in occupational therapy. Richmond and Holland (2011) state that the attainment of visual perceptual skills leads to academic capabilities. Many of the learners were discharged from occupational therapy as they had remediated their visual perceptual problem areas. This is evidence that the learners’ experiences within the LSEN school has led to the achievement of the first widespread character strength. The learners who continue to have therapy have

made progress (despite their problem areas) within the sessions, as indicated by the therapists' responses.

The second widespread character strength which comprises of persistence, zest, authenticity has been substantiated by the therapists in their views about the learners' responses towards therapy. "Determination, enthusiasm, co-operative and responded well", were some of the words that the therapists used when describing most of the learners within this study. This again points out that most of the learners in this study have had experiences within this school which lead to the development of this character strength. Chan (2010) infers that when a learner demonstrates persistence and zest these qualities allow the learner to focus on building their strengths rather than becoming overwhelmed by their weakness.

Reiser (2012) infers that the emphasis is placed on the learning difficulty when these learners are placed within the LSEN School and this succumbs to the medical deficit model. Further to this the learner is seen as an inactive onlooker rather than an active participant to his /her situation. The medical model further emphasises that all the decisions about the learners' placement and therapy is made by the health care professional and the learner is not granted authority in decision making regarding his/her placement and treatment (White, Simpson, Gonda, Raveslout&Loble, 2010).The acquisition of the second character strength for most learners in this study actually indicates that they are active participants within the therapy process as opposed to their passivity during the placement process.

Humanity - which the third widespread character strength which encompasses kindness, love and social intelligence (Chan, 2010) - was perceptible in the therapists' responses about most of the learners in this study. Further to this the learners maintained that they liked this school, and the friends that they have made, as evidenced by the first question pertaining to their experiences within this school. This strength permits the holistic development of the learner (Chan, 2010). The development of these skills again raises questions around the medical deficit model that underpinned their placement into these schools as indicated by White et al., (2010). This was

substantiated by Rieser (2012) who surmised that the learner needs to undergo a battery of tests, is then diagnosed and this results in their normal requirements being stifled. Rieser (2012) further remarked that when the individual received therapy, the needs and the opinions of the individual were not taken into account, and that resulted in a problematic re-integration into society. The attainment of these skills allows the learners the opportunity to re-integrate into society.

The fourth character strength which is justice and consists of fairness, leadership and teamwork, was pointed out by some of the therapists and the learners themselves when they confirmed that the learners within a particular grade work well together. The learners re-iterated the development of this strength when they acknowledged the actuality that they enjoyed participating in the activities at school as they were with their friends. Chan (2010) maintained that the learners need to possess these skills as it allows for re-integration into society and school. Selikewitz, (2012) indicates that learning difficulties may also affect the organisation, impulse control and social proficiency of an individual's life. Within this school the learners as evidenced by their responses have made adequate social relationships and perhaps find a sense of belonging. This again supposes that learners' experiences within this school have led to their well-being which is the foundation of positive psychology.

The fifth character strength which is temperance comprises of forgiveness, modesty, prudence and self-regulation. As explained in the discussion of the theoretical framework that underpinned this study, self-regulation in this context may be seen as the learners' ability to get onto the correct mode to accomplish their tasks. Their progress within the therapy they received suggests that these learners were able to acquire at least one aspect of the fifth widespread character strength.

The sixth widespread character strength is transcendence and these encompass beauty and superiority, gratitude, humour and spirituality. More than one learner expressed their gratitude to their teachers, and friends. This in turn again infers that this component of the sixth widespread character strength was developed. This deduces that the learners' experiences within this LSEN School are positive.

### 5.3.4 Learners' experiences of success

The learners were asked if the activities that they participate in are included into the timetable or the school curriculum and if the answer was yes what it means to them to be able to participate in activities that they are good at or like in school. The participants' responses were as follows:

Participant A: *"Yes, physical exercise to get out of work sometime its swimming and running. I swim and I can run a far distance as well."*

Participant B: *"Two of the activities is not in the timetable but still at the school. The one is before school starts, we run around while everyone sits on the field. The other one is after school."*

Participant c: *"Percussion is after school. Maths and social sciences are in school, in the timetable. I have a love for music. If I put my mind to it I can do it. It helps me to play the xylophone. With maths is for a logical brain to be good at engineering and if you're good at social sciences you will be good at entrepreneurship."*

Participant D: *"Only choir is in the timetable. Hockey and netball is after school with one of the teachers. I like it because I have all my friends with me at school all the time."*

Participant E: *"No they are after school but at this school. Umh it means that I can be with my friends and do something I like."*

Participant F: *"What kind of activities?"* The researcher had to say re-iterate, *"The ones you said that you like earlier on."* *"It depends on with swimming how warm or cold it is. And Judo sometimes it depends. I leave early if I have lots of homework. Because after Judo I only get half an hour to do my homework. I don't really like doing my homework at home. I prefer to play at home."*

Participant G: *"It means to me, hard to tell when I now have the hiccups. It means to me, not so sure. But I like Judo. I like it a lot."*

The school follows the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which began implementation in 2012. This is the curriculum that is followed by the main stream schools in South Africa; there is no special curriculum for LSEN schools (DOE, 2007). Despite the learners within this school following the national curriculum the analysis of the school timetable revealed that certain of the activities that the learners enjoyed were included into the school day.

The grades five to seven timetables included swimming, choir and art into it. The other activities that the learners liked and participated in were held at the school, some were before the school day began and others were scheduled after school. This indicated that the school incorporated just more than the standard curriculum.

It can be argued that swimming and art make up Life orientation and Creative arts respectively. Creative arts and Life orientation make up one and a half hours and one hour respectively in the intermediate phase (grades four to six) curriculum (DOE, 2011). The grade seven learners fall within the senior phase and the CAPS document stipulates two hours should be allocated for Life orientation and Creative arts (DOE, 2011). Over and above the allocation of these two activities into the timetable the learners as evidenced from their responses participate in sport type activities and other extramural activities either before or after the typical school day.

When viewing the contributions of the LSEN School to the experiences of the learners in the light of the third pillar of positive psychology - the school and the curriculum need to permit a constructive environment, simultaneously creating a challenging, nurturing and sustaining setting (Chan, 2010, p.9) - the responses of the participants and the reviewing of the school curriculum indicate that the school has taken the learners out of a mundane routine and placed healthy challenges to allow them to enhance their superior skills and not only focussing on the learning difficulty.

It may also be interpreted from the analysis of the data that this school assists with the establishment of learners' accomplishments in the activities they partake in at this institution. This leads to the well-being of the learners (Seligman, Ernst & Gillam, 2009). Chan (2010) deduces that if the school places emphasis on the strengths of the learner

by utilising the three pillars of positive psychology this will in turn yield positive experiences for the learner. The analysis of the curriculum, timetable and the responses obtained from the learners indicated that although there is focus on the weakness (which may be found in the subjects the learner receives or a speech/ language or occupational therapy related difficulty), there is a large contingent of the institution that allows the learners access to participate in activities that brings to light their strengths. This again signifies that the learners have had positive experiences with this LSEN School.

### **5.3.5 Learners' experiences of talent development**

According to Subotnik (2000) in order for the learners' talent to expand the learners' character strengths should be acknowledged, intensified and explored (Subotnik, 2000). The learners were asked what their favourite subjects were at school and why? Their responses were as follows:

Participant A: *"It's Art. You get to be very creative. There is not lots of written work. I like doing stuff with my hands and painting. We do art once a week on a Friday."*

Participant B: *"I like art. It is creative and it's really fun for me cos I'm really good at drawing and I like to draw."*

Participant C: *"maths because it's very logical. I can relate to it well. I actually see people as numbers which might seem odd. But I actually see people as numbers with a storyline."*

Participant D: *"Maths because it is the easiest work to do because I understand it and history because I learn about the past."*

Participant E: *"Umh my favourite subjects is art and um maths, because I like maths and art I can express myself."*

Participant F: *"Um maths is easier but English is easier, not really my strong one."*

Participant G: *"My favourite is geometry because it is easy."*

As indicated by the responses of the learners in this study, this institution and the curriculum support the development of the learners' talents. The participants declared that they had one or more favourite activities at this school and they were able to provide the reason for their answer. The prominence being placed on the strengths of the learner is marked as learners indicated their participation in activities which allowed the enhancement of their strengths. In addition to this although the learners follow the national 'mainstream' curriculum many of the learners in this study stated that the numbers within the classrooms were smaller than the numbers in mainstream classrooms and this can be seen as another contributing factor to their talent development. This again signifies that their experiences within this LSEN School have been positive.

### **5.3.6 Learners' experiences of positive organisational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship**

The theoretical framework chapter posed the question: Does the curriculum, the academic timetables and the therapy programmes allow for progression of value of life? The learners were asked: Do you feel that learning is easier or difficult at this school? Their responses were:

Participant A: *"Easier because they teach you skills how to learn, how to spell in speech therapy we do chunking and syllabising. We are given more time to learn."*

Participant B: *"It is easier because now I learnt how to summarise things. When I have to go to study, I summarise it to learn quicker and easier."*

Participant C: *"Learning is actually easier at this school. But you actually work hard at this school, and work harder. Well it is actually easier and difficult because you have to think."*

Participant D: *"Easier, because my old school used to be Eton\* and this is my first time in a government school. I've only ever been in a private school. It is easier and the teachers explain things very nicely show me how to do it more."*

Participant E: *“In the middle. Well something’s are harder, something’s we do and I don’t understand. I can’t think of them right now.”*

Participant F: *“They try to make it as easy as possible except for Zulu. IsiZulu is probably my weakest one. I have a bad memory. With the things I like sometimes seem more important than others if you know what I mean.”*

Participant G: *“I say its harder at this school, actually I say itseasier. In Thurston\*  
Participant G: “I say its harder at this school, actually I say its easier .In Thurstonwe had so many exams, seven a week.”*

The subsequent question supplemented the first question. How is it easier or difficult for you at this school? The answers were as follows:

Participant A: *“Easier there are less people in the class and they see your abilities. They do not have 32 people to look at. There are only 13 more and I have a chance to be picked to answer.”*

Participant B: *“Its easier because we get through the syllabus quicker. We have less in our class. We have more time to ask questions. More fun in this school. There is more time to go out and get fresh air to our breaks. Syllabus is harder but with the teachers help it is easier and goes quickly.”*

Participant C: *“The teachers explain what they are saying, what you are trying to learn. They explain it to a degree that you see it. They explain it like they more clearly so that you understand fully, like giving examples. They dumb it down.”*

Participant D: *“Cos if you’re stuck you got your special places and you don’t move classes. And if you don’t understand you can go up to the teacher shows you again how to do it.”*

Participant E: *“In the middle, it can’t be too easy or too hard.”*

Participant F: *“Easier. I don’t know. They don’t give so much work and so little time to do it in. And the classes are smaller and so you can, the teachers pay more attention to you compared to a class of 24 or something.”*

Participant G: *“Well in the weeks that I have been here it had gotten way harder last year. Now it takes me 5 minutes to finish, now it is just fine.”*

Four out of the seven participants’(participant A, B, C and D) responses were all positive. There were two participants (participants F and G) that indicated that it was fluctuating, however their responses included the positive aspects. Participant E’s response was indecisive; she stated that it could not be hard or too easy. The above analysis indicates that positive organisational scholarship is facilitated with the learners. The theoretical framework of positive psychology explains positive organisational psychology as the vocation and the organisational subjects (Donaldson&Ko, 2010). In this study vocation is looked at the participants being learners as this is their work or vocation and the curriculum and therapy programmes are the organisational subjects.

Learners’ responses to the question posed at the beginning of this theme indicated that positive dynamics that the learners experienced in their interactions with their teachers have piloted the instillation of positive organisational behaviour and scholarship in the learners. The learners have indicated in their responses to other questions posed to them that they have attained positive organisational behaviour. This in turn has allowed them to fare successfully in the activities that they carry out at school. Many authors (Rieser, 2012; Shifrer, Muller & Callahan, 2011; White, Simpson, Gonda, Ravesloot&Loble, 2010) suggested that there were many factors that impeded the learner within the LSEN School from attaining holistic development. The learners’ responses mentioned above illustrate that within this particular school the learners have gained holistic intervention as positive organisational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship are afforded to the learners. These responses concur with a study by Holland and Richmond (2011) that focussed on learners with average and above average intelligence in LSEN schools receiving individualised care.

### **5.3.7 Learners’ understandings and experiences of IQ and EQ**

Emotional intelligence is gradually becoming the preferred technique to deduce an individual's level of competencies. It is the contemporary trail of thought. When asked about their understandings of 'superior IQ', learners' responses were as follows:

Participant A: *"It means that I am cleverer than the average child."* (Smiles).

Participant B: *"having a superior IQ you are very smart and good at certain subjects but have difficulty with certain subjects which lower down your IQ."*

Participant C: *"I understand that, I think my brain is very logical and I'm very smart but I do have a learning disability."*

Participant D: *"Just that I have a high IQ um I'm smarter than most people."*

Participant E: *"Superior means it's a bit smarter than others. It's a bit smarter than other kids."*

Participant F: *"I don't actually pay attention to that bit. All it means I'm smarter than average people. I think."*

Participant G: *"I don't really have a superior IQ. Let's just say my intelligence level, let's just say I've passed my exam by 50 and 60 percent, the highest was 80 percent. I think I do have a superior IQ, I have a high IQ, I am good at building things. I really don't know how to build things with cement."*

Responses to the ensuing question asked - do you know and understand why you attend this school? - were as follows:

Participant A: *"I do."* (Smiles). *"I have a superior IQ with a learning disability. I've got stuff to catch up to before the end of grade seven. Montgomery\* is the only takes learners who have missed the ability to catch up in two or three years."*

Participant B: *"Yes I do. I attend this school because I have a deficiency which is called visual perceptual. All the letters look the same to me. If it is not in the story I can't infer."*

*The author cannot say that the girl is sitting in the corner and tears in her eyes. She will have to say the girl is crying. I took things literally. I've gotten better at it."*

Participant C: *"Yes I do. I have an average or above average IQ and I have a learning disability and need help with it. I fell behind when I went to Australia\* for two years and came back."*

Participant D: *"Yes. I attend this school because I struggle with my reading and spelling."*

Participant E: *"It's because I have, I, I work in a different way other people in the mainstream and I have a problem and I have a problem with...."*

Participant F: *"I add this school because I lack concentration. At my old school I day dreamed ever 20 minutes or something, but here not too much."*

Participant G: *"Yes I do. Pretty much sure I have ADHD and learn to control it. Attention difficulty hyper something."*

The above responses by the participants indicate that this school facilitates emotional intelligence in its learners. The learners acknowledge that they have a learning difficulty and this is the reason that they attend this school. Some of the participants (participant A, B, C and D) further acknowledge the extent of the problems they experience. In their responses some of the participants (A, B, F and G) not only focus on the problem they have but also their development at this school. Bar-On (2010) highlights the link between positive psychology and emotional intelligence. This particular LSEN School has incorporated positive psychology into its functioning and operation. It therefore may be postulated that the facilitation of emotional intelligence is occurring within the institution and the learners in this study.

This postulation is in accordance with most of the responses received from the participants throughout the interview. Many stated that they have established good and supportive friendships and this is another contributing factor to the facilitation of emotional intelligence. Bar-On (2010) maintains that the individual who shows

emotional intelligence is able to understand the emotional state of others and has the capability for constructive community communication. This again iterates that the experiences of learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties are positive within this LSEN school.

#### **5.4. Concluding Comments:**

This study employed the use of thematic analysis to describe and analyse the data. Inductive thematic analysis was utilised as the researcher looked at all the data sets to depict and conclude the emergent themes. This study yielded seven themes. They were: Positive experiences of learners within the LSEN School; the learners' experiences of activities that develop their strengths; the learners' experiences of the development of their character strengths; learners' experiences of success; learners' experiences of talent development; learners' experiences of positive organisational behaviour and positive organisational scholarship and learners' experiences of emotional intelligence in learners.

The next chapter is the concluding chapter of this thesis. It entails the conclusion and recommendations of this study. The findings of this study are discussed in the light of the two research questions that guided this study. This will be followed by the recommendations that emerged from the findings.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This study looked at the experiences of learners with superior IQs and learning difficulties in a LSEN school. It employed a qualitative methodology within an interpretivist paradigm. Semi-structured interviews with the learners, a document analysis of the curriculum and interviews with the therapists formed the methods of data

generation. This study employed the use of thematic analysis to describe and analyse the data, and yielded seven themes.

This chapter is the concluding chapter of this thesis. It discusses the findings of this study in the light of the two research questions that guided this study. This is followed by the concluding discussion and the limitations of this study. The recommendations of this study conclude this chapter.

## **6.2. Main findings**

The first research question that guided this study was: Do learners classified as 'intellectually superior' and with learning difficulties experience a holistic approach to education in an LSEN school?

As alluded to in chapter five the learners within this LSEN School follow the mainstream curriculum. Despite the fact that they followed the mainstream curriculum, the learners indicated that their teachers' supportive attitude and in depth explanations resulted in them understanding the work given to them. Some of the learners also drew attention to the reality that there are small class sizes and this facilitates the process of learning. In light of the data generated it may be concluded that this results in achievements of success for these learners despite the learning difficulty.

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) affirmed that in order to construct positive potentials an individual needs to be seen as the element of analysis as opposed to the medical model whereby the emphasis is placed on the impairment. The teachers understand that they have to explain the work presented to the learners in detail due to their learning difficulties. By adopting this method of teaching they shift the focus away from the difficulty. The teachers' nurturing and accepting approach towards the learners results in learner success. The resultant effects are that the learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties have positive experiences within this LSEN school.

Activities such as swimming, art, choir, library, computers and hall time were added onto the class timetable. Hall time was indicated in the timetable as either use of the smart board, or a lesson that was presented in the hall instead of in the classroom. Hall

time was also discovered by the researcher to be a time whereby classes may be combined. This may be viewed as taking the learners out of the mundane routine.

The learners indicated that they participated in activities that they liked, enjoyed and were good at in school. These activities are either before or after the formal schooling day. This indicated that this school also focuses on the strengths of these learners. Therefore the learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties do experience a holistic approach to education at this LSEN School.

Learners' participation in activities they like leads to their well-being. This in turn results in escalation of the learning and accomplishments of the learners. Learning is the conventional aim of attending school (Seligman, Ernst,&Gillham, 2009). This substantiates that the learners' participation in activities that focus on their strengths has had a positive impact on their overall experiences within the school.

The second research question that guided this study was: What are the implications of this to the learner? (this question leads on from question one).

The learners participated in activities that they liked, enjoyed and were good at has resulted in flow. Flow occurs when a learner is involved in successful activities that results in them experiencing gratification (Chan, 2010). This impacts positively on the learners' over all well-being, health and schooling although they present with a learning difficulty. This leads to love of school and the learner experiencing joy.

The therapy that the learners received according to the responses made by the therapists indicated most learners have made progress, as evidenced by their discharge from individual or small group therapy. This is indicative of them having remediated the problem areas or difficulties that they presented with. The therapists commented that most of these learners took well to therapy, refuting claims that individuals become passive onlookers in therapy. This leads to the learners' development and growth which results in love for school. The love of learning occurs as there is a large contingent of the school day that focuses on their strengths or talents (Chan, 2010). These have

positive implications for these learners, after two years they remediate the problem areas that they experience and return to mainstream.

### **6.3. Discussion**

In light of the data generated it may be concluded that the learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties within this LSEN school do in fact have positive experiences. Their positive experiences as indicated by the data surpass the negative experiences that they encountered when they were assessed and placed in a special needs school.

The process of placement of these learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties in an LSEN School is underpinned by the medical deficit model (White, Simpson, Gonda, Raveslout&Loble, 2010). Shifrer, Muller and Callahan (2011) maintain that individuals who are viewed through the lens of this model are viewed in a pessimistic manner and the focus is placed on making the individual 'normal'. Reiser (2012) further comments that the individual that presents with a difficulty or impairment is made as 'normal' as possible by the health care professional. Within the school system this may lead to the learner who experiences learning difficulties being viewed as defective or impaired. The learner then undergoes a battery of assessments, is segregated from his/her peers and placed into the LSEN School.

Although the placement of these learners in the LSEN School is rooted in the medical deficit model, in light of the research generated it is evident that once these learners commence at this school there is a shift of focus away from the medical deficit model that underpinned the process of their placement at this school. The learners indicated through their responses in their interviews that they had gained positive strengths, important friendships and skills at this school. The theoretical framework of positive psychology that underpinned this study provided a shift away from the medical deficit model in understanding the experiences of these learners. The focus should be on the strengths of the learner in order for the learner to have positive experiences. In light of the data it is evident that once the learners are admitted to this school they receive holistic interventions. It therefore can be deduced that the learners in this LSEN School receive a holistic approach to education. If education is holistic the learner

experiences the love of school and this results in flow (Chan, 2010). Flow is associated not only with the well-being of a learner within the school environment but also includes the general well-being which encompasses every facet of the learner's life. The positive experiences that the learners have at this school have positive implications for them. This enhances their optimal functioning.

This LSEN School follows mainstream curriculum which is currently the CAPS curriculum (DOE, 2007). The learners' difficulties lie within academia as indicated by the fact that many received or still receive occupational therapy and speech/language therapy. The school has structured their day so that the learners benefit maximally with the assistance and in depth explanation by the teachers. The therapy they receive allows the remediation of their problem areas which results in the discharge from therapy. This again substantiates the growth of the learners as they receive assistance with their weaker areas and at the same time they participate in activities that allow them to experience success.

Placement of learners in LSEN Schools are governed by the medical deficit model however the data generated revealed that the experiences of learners with 'superior IQs' and learning difficulties within this school are positive. The researcher postulates that this school has applied positive psychology in their approach and design of the school days. This study corresponds with Einstein's declaration 'that learning is experience' (Joshi, 2012, p. 1).

#### **6.4. Limitations**

This study is limited only to the learners who have a 'superior IQs' ranging from 120-129 (on the global scale) with learning difficulties from this particular school. The researcher interviewed seven learners with superior IQs' and learning difficulties. The data yielded is not representative of all learners within this LSEN School. This data is representative of the learners with 'superior IQS' and learning difficulties at a certain point in time. The research findings cannot be generalized to all LSEN schools in KwaZulu-Natal, as the findings are only representative of this particular school. This then leads to the limitation of the second entity of trustworthiness which is *applicability*.

Ten consent forms were handed out but only seven parents consented to their children participating in the study.

## **6.5. Recommendations**

This study recommends that the strategy that this particular school follows which focuses on learners' strengths be adopted by other LSEN schools to use as there is no specialized curriculum or approach for LSEN learners. All learners with mild learning difficulties are not able to attend this school due to logistics or socio-economic difficulties. This particular school has a high success rate of learners' re-integration into the mainstream schools. It is therefore recommended that with departmental consent those chosen government mainstream schools follow a similar type of focus to allow the learners who experience difficulty to also experience success. This is in keeping with inclusive education whereby the learner with a mild learning difficulty is not taken out of their mainstream school (DOE, 2001).

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05 November 2013

Mrs A Sewraj (20004836)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0684/013M  
Project title: The experiences of learners assessed as "Intellectual superior" in a school for Learners with Special Needs (LSEN)

Dear Ms Sewraj,


Expedited Approval

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Acting Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Dr Linda Jairam  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr MN Davids  
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

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## Appendix B

Dear Principal and Governing Body

I am a second year Master's of Education student currently busy with my dissertation. My topic is the 'Experiences of learners assessed as 'intellectually superior' in a school for learners with special educational needs (LSEN).

The aims of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the experiences of learners assessed as 'intellectually superior' and who also experience learning difficulties in an LSEN school.
2. To explore whether these learners experience a holistic approach to education in an LSEN School.
3. To explore the implications of the type of educational approach used for these learners.

I therefore seek permission to conduct my study at your school as there are learners who have learning difficulties and who also have been assessed as 'intellectually superior'. The potential benefit of participating in this study will provide information on learners who have 'superior intellectual' quotients (IQs) and learning difficulties as there is no to minimal research conducted in this area.

The learners who have been assessed as 'intellectually superior' will be interviewed. This will be conducted at a venue at the school 20 minutes during the lunch break. There is a schedule of 12 questions that the learners will be asked. The estimated time to complete each interview is 20 minutes. There will be seven interviews on seven separate days as there are seven participants. The researcher will transcribe the responses given by the participants onto paper. The participants will be informed that the researcher will need to record their responses and this will be kept confidential

The school curriculum will be analysed to provide extensive information on the research. Permission will be sought from the occupational and speech/language

therapist to observe these learners during to interview regarding the learners' problem areas and performance.

Informed consent will be obtained from the parents.

Participation is voluntary, and the participants may with draw at any time. The researcher will discontinue with the interview or observation of the therapy if a participant indicates through verbal or non verbal communication that he/ she is uncomfortable with the data generation process.

In no way will their identities be exposed.

The name of the school and the names of the learners will not be mentioned in the study. Pseudonyms will be used. The IQ results of each participant will be confidential. The IQ results are required by the researcher to make up the sample population as this is defining criteria to determine the participants.

There are no financial expenses to be incurred by the participants.

All data generated written or electronic (information transferred onto the computer) will be kept in a lock up cupboard by the researcher, sealed and marked confidential. After the stipulated period of keeping the written and electronic data, the data will be incinerated.

If you have any further queries please contact the academic supervisor, Dr. V Jairam. The contact details are listed below.

Thank you for your kind co-operation regarding this matter.

AreshnieSewrajDr. V. Jairam

\_\_\_\_\_

Master's Student

Occupational Therapist

BOT UKZN

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

BPAED

MED, PHD

083274466, [areshnieot@gmail.com](mailto:areshnieot@gmail.com)

031 260 1438, [jairam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:jairam@ukzn.ac.za)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Complete names of the person filling out the form) declare that I understand the information provided in this document and the type of study that is going to be conducted. I consent to the learners participating in this study.

I fully understand that the learners have the right to with draw from the study at any given time if they wish to do so.

Signature of Principal.

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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# Livingstone

## Primary School

04 November 2013

Dear Dr. S. Singh

(Acting) Chairperson for Research

Permission is hereby given to Areshnie Sewraj in order to conduct a study 'The experiences of learners with a superior I.Q. and learning difficulties in an LSEN school'.

It is further suggested that formal visits and studies be conducted by the Universities and Curriculum advisors to obtain first hand information before devising the completed curriculum.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C.S. Butt  
Principal

Appendix D:

Consent forms:

**Parent consent**

Dear Parents/ caregivers

I am a second year masters' student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Edgewood campus. I am currently involved in completing my dissertation.

My topic is 'Experiences of learners assessed as 'intellectually superior'ina school for learners with special educational needs (LSEN).

The aims of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the experiences of learners assessed as 'intellectually superior' and who also experience learning difficulties in an LSEN school.
2. To explore whether these learners experience a holistic approach to education in an LSEN School.
3. To explore the implications of the type of educational approach used for these learners

I have chosen your child to be part of my study as they were assessed as' intellectually superior' and experiencing learning difficulties.potential benefit of participating in this study will provide information on learners who have 'superior intellectual' quotients (IQs) and learning difficulties as there is no to minimal research conducted in this area.

There will be a set of questions that will be asked to the learners. (Please see attached document for the questions). This will be conducted at a venue at the school for 20 minutes during the lunch break. There is a schedule of 12 questions that the learners will be asked. (Please see attached form labelled appendix one for the interview questions). The estimated time to complete each interview is 20 minutes. There will be seven interviews on seven separate days as there are seven participants. The

researcher will transcribe the responses given by the participants onto paper. The participants will be informed that the researcher will need to record their responses and this will be kept confidential.

The school curriculum and the therapy programme will be analysed to provide extensive information on the research. Permission will be sought from the occupational and speech/language therapist to interview them regarding the problem areas and interventions your child received in therapy.

Participation is voluntary, and the participants may withdraw at any time. In no way will their identities be exposed. The researcher will discontinue with the interview or observation of the therapy if a participant indicates through verbal or non verbal communication that he/ she is uncomfortable with the data generation process

The withdrawal of the participants will not lead to any reprisal.

There are no financial expenses to be incurred by the participants.

All data generated written or electronic (information transferred onto the computer) will be kept in a lock up cupboard by the researcher, sealed in a large envelope and marked confidential. After the stipulated period of keeping the written and electronic data, the data will be incinerated.

If you have any further queries please contact the academic supervisor, Dr. V Jairam. The contact details are listed below.

Your kind co-operation regarding this matter is highly appreciated.

Areshnie Sewraj Dr. V. Jairam

\_\_\_\_\_

Master's Student

Occupational Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

BPAED

BOT UKZN

MED, P

083274466, [areshnieot@gmail.com](mailto:areshnieot@gmail.com) 031 260 1438, [jairam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:jairam@ukzn.ac.za)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Declaration of parental consent**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Complete names of the person filling out the form) declare that I understand the information provided in this document and the type of study that is going to be conducted. I consent to my child participating in this study. I fully understand that my child has the right to withdraw from the study at any given time if my child wishes to do so.

Signature of parent

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix E:

### **Consent forms for therapists**

Dear Occupational Therapist/ Speech and language Therapist

I am a second year Master's of Education student currently busy with my dissertation. My topic is the 'Experiences of learners assessed as 'intellectually superior' in a school for learners with special educational needs (LSEN).

The aims of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the experiences of learners assessed as 'intellectually superior' and who also experience learning difficulties in an LSEN school.
2. To explore whether these learners experience a holistic approach to education in an LSEN School.
3. To explore the implications of the type of educational approach used for these learners

I therefore seek permission for you to information about each of the seven participants areas of difficulty and performances in therapy. The school curriculum and the information you provide will be analysed to provide extensive information on the research.

The participants are learners who have learning difficulties and who also have been assessed as 'intellectually superior'. The potential benefit of participating in this study will provide information on learners who have 'superior intellectual quotients (IQs) and learning difficulties as there is no to minimal research conducted in this area.

The researcher will transcribe the information given onto paper and this will be kept confidential

Informed consent will be obtained from the parents.

Participation is voluntary, and the participants may withdraw at any time. The researcher will discontinue with the interview or observation of the therapy if a participant indicates through verbal or non verbal communication that he/ she is uncomfortable with the data generation process.

In no way will their identities be exposed.

The name of the school and the names of the learners will not be mentioned in the study. Pseudonyms will be used.

There are no financial expenses to be incurred by the participants.

All data generated written or electronic (information transferred onto the computer) will be kept in a lock up cupboard by the researcher, sealed and marked confidential. After the stipulated period of keeping the written and electronic data, data will be incinerated.

If you have any further queries please contact the academic supervisor, Dr. V Jairam. The contact details are listed below.

Thank you for your kind co-operation regarding this matter.

AreshnieSewrajDr. V. Jairam

\_\_\_\_\_

Master's Student

Occupational Therapist

BOT UKZN

083274466, [areshnieot@gmail.com](mailto:areshnieot@gmail.com)

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

BPAED, MED

PHD

031 2601438, [jairam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:jairam@ukzn.ac.za)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Complete names of the person filling out the form) declare that I understand the information provided in this document and the type of study that is going to be conducted. I consent to the therapy session being observed.

I fully understand that I have the right to with draw from the study at any given time if I wish to do so.

Signature of therapist

Date

---

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Appendix F:

## **Participant Consent Form**

Dear Learner

I am a second year Master's of Education student from the University of Kwa –Zulu Natal. My topic is the 'Experiences of learners assessed as 'intellectually superior' in a school for learners with special educational needs (LSEN).

The reason that I have chosen you to take part in my study is because you have a high IQ and some difficulties with certain areas or subjects at school. Very little to no study has been done with learners like your self.

I have chosen seven learners from your school. The other six learners are from different grades. Your parents' permission was asked before asking you to take part in the study. I will interview you for 20 minutes during the lunch break. The interviews will be done in an area you are comfortable with and no one will be able to see me asking you the questions. This is not a test or examination. The answers you give me, I will record as there is a lot for me to remember.

Please let me know if you are uncomfortable or if you do not want to continue with the interviews. If you do not want to take part in the study you may say so, this will not be held against you.

I will also need to observe you in occupational (OT) or speech therapy. This will only be done once.

Your names will not be used when I write down what you say to me. I will not give this information to any one at your school, however when I finish my study and write up a 'book' on it your parents, teachers, principal , therapist and you will be able to look at it.

All the information you give to me will be sealed and locked up in a cupboard, only I will have the keys to this cupboard. In the next few years this information will be burnt.

Thank you for letting me interview you.

AreshnieSewrajDr. V. Jairam

Masters Student

Supervisor

Occupational therapist (BOT) BPAED, MED, PHD

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I \_\_\_\_\_ (your name and surname) want to take part in the study and I will be asked a set of questions. The researcher will also observe (see me) in one Occupational therapy and one speech therapy session.

Date\_\_\_\_\_

