

Teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms

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Declaration

I, Samantha Hart, declare that

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Samantha Hart

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Carol Mitchell

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Abstract

This study explored special needs teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms. The study was guided by the following three research questions: (1) What are teachers' in special needs schools experiences with oppositional and defiant behaviour? (2) What methods do these teachers find effective or ineffective in dealing with learners with oppositional and defiant behaviour? (3) What are these teachers' views on the relevance and adequacy of their training in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour? Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of nine special needs teachers from three special needs schools in Pietermaritzburg. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. The research findings suggested that dealing with oppositional and defiant learners was a frustrating and demotivating experience for the teachers. The teachers described both their successful and unsuccessful experiences in dealing with these learners. The adequacy and effectiveness of the teachers' training was also described as ineffective whereas their experiences in the classroom were described as invaluable in dealing with these learners. Suggestions for future improvements were also made by the teachers. Implications for future practice include more relevant training and workshops, the creation and implementation of a database or helpline, an improvement in the support services available to special needs teachers, the inclusion of mental health professionals in special needs schools and finally a re-examination of the current curriculum taught in special needs schools.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Oppositional and defiant behaviour from learners in a classroom can be highly problematic. Some examples of these behaviours are “emotional outbursts, denial of responsibility, absenteeism, teacher criticism, personal frustration, insensitivity, and defensiveness” (Walton, 2011, cited in Richardson, 2014, p.12). These kinds of behaviours prove to be a distraction to the other learners in that classroom as well as to the teacher. Shores and Wehby (1999), say that learners who displayed these behaviours “are more likely to be rejected by classmates and to get less positive feedback from teachers which, in turn, contributes to off task behavior and less instruction time” (cited in Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004, p.97). This type of behaviour can also create an unpleasant classroom environment which may not be conducive to successful learning and teaching, as the teacher’s time is taken up with classroom management tasks instead of teaching and learning tasks. This has the potential to create relationship, as well as academic problems for the specific learner as well as his peers and teachers. Teachers have varying degrees of success in dealing with these behaviours and learners.

Both teachers in the mainstream and special needs education systems face behavioural problems from learners in their classrooms, and many of these behaviours appear to be in opposition to, and in defiance of, the goals that the teacher is trying to achieve in helping these learners reach their potentials. Dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviours from one or many children in the classroom can lead to feelings of frustration and exhaustion for the teacher and may lead to the teacher questioning her or his own capabilities and competence as a teacher. This can influence how the teacher feels about the learners in the class and how she reacts to their behaviours, either out of frustration and anger, or in a more controlled and calm manner. The experiences and feelings of teachers, in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners, play an important role in how successful these learners are in achieving their potential and succeeding in the school environment.

Teachers in special needs classrooms face the stresses typically associated with teaching but they also face additional pressures. Jonker (2005, p. 43) stated that some of these additional pressures included the number of children in the class, the variety of special needs in one

class and the amount of extra work that teachers must do in order to cater for this variety. Having a child who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in the class can in many cases add to this pressure as the teacher has to stop what s/he was doing in order to deal with the disruptions this behaviour may cause.

Previous studies have examined teachers' perceptions and experiences and have focused on resistant and disruptive behaviour in order to create guidelines for classroom management practices or to help teachers increase their general wellbeing to avoid burnout or the need to leave the profession (Corrie, 2002; Jonker, 2005). This current study aimed to add to the knowledge of how teachers experienced oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms with a specific focus on special needs classrooms, and the perceived adequacy of the training that these teachers received in dealing with these behaviours.

This study differed from previous research in terms of its focus on the special needs context, instead of the mainstream context. It also gave teachers a voice instead of the popular focus on how to make these learners less defiant and oppositional, a perspective often given by outsiders and not by the teachers themselves. By focusing on the training received by teachers and its suitability in helping them deal with oppositional and defiant learners this also added to the focus on the teachers themselves, and gave them the opportunity to voice their perspectives on the training they received. This research aimed to reveal some strategies and alternatives for dealing with these behaviours that teachers could make use of in their classrooms.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 Aims of the study

The current study aimed to provide an increased focus on the special needs educational context in relation to how these teachers experience oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms. It also aimed to add to the limited literature on the topic of special needs education and served to provide special needs teachers with the opportunity to share their own experiences of these behaviours. The study also aimed to highlight the quality of the initial teacher training received in relation to dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour. The identification of successful and unsuccessful strategies in dealing with these behaviours was also an aim of this current study.

1.2.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the current study were:

1. To explore teachers' experiences of dealing with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in special needs classrooms.
2. To identify the most common difficulties that the teachers experienced in order to manage oppositional and defiant behaviour.
3. To identify the most common strategies that the teachers employed in order to manage oppositional and defiant behaviour.
4. To explore teachers' perceptions of the adequacy and relevance of the training that they received in order to deal with oppositional and defiant behaviour.
5. To explore whether teachers used their training and/or alternative methods to deal with oppositional and defiant learner behaviour.

1.3 Research questions

The aims and objectives formed the basis for the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' in special needs schools experiences with oppositional and defiant behaviour?
2. What methods do these teachers find effective or ineffective in dealing with learners with oppositional and defiant behaviour?
3. What are these teachers' views on the relevance and adequacy of their training in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour?

1.4 Methodological approach

This study was qualitative, and more specifically, exploratory in nature. The study formed part of the interpretive paradigm. The study was conducted in three special needs schools in Pietermaritzburg. The sample consisted of nine special needs teachers, three from each of the schools. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with each of the teachers and the data was recorded and transcribed by myself. The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is that it contributes to the knowledge base around the challenges facing special needs educators; in addition, it has the potential to inform future training of teachers in special needs schools. It is hoped that the research reveals strategies which may assist with classroom management for learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour. The study also allowed for the voices of special needs teachers to be heard, and to share their experiences of learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour. This serves to benefit both those teachers entering the special needs educational system and those who are already in this system.

1.6 Outline of the study

This study consists of the following six chapters:

Chapter one introduces the topic of teachers experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in their special needs classrooms. This chapter provides a background to the current situation in special needs classrooms, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions that guided the study and the significance of the study.

Chapter two is the literature review in which both local and international research was reviewed in relation to oppositional and defiant learners and their behaviours in the classroom and teachers experiences of these behaviours. The limitations of the previous research studies, in terms of their lack of focus on special needs education and the teachers' perspectives, was highlighted.

Chapter three presents the research methodology used in this study. The use of a qualitative research design was justified and discussed. A description of the sampling procedure, the sample and the data collection tool was provided. The trustworthiness of the study was also discussed and the data analysis procedure used was described.

Chapter four focuses on the results of the study that came directly from the data collected from semi-structured interviews with the participants. Excerpts from these interviews were included in discussing these results and themes were used to structure the data.

Chapter five is a discussion of the results of this current study in relation to the existing literature in the field of special needs education and teachers' experiences of oppositional and defiant behaviour and learners.

Chapter six, the concluding chapter in the study, summarises the main findings of the study, discusses the limitations of the study, provides recommendations for practical implementation and makes suggestions for future research possibilities.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This study examined teachers' experiences of dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in the context of special needs schools. A review of the available literature on the topic of oppositional defiant behaviour and special needs teachers' perspectives on these behaviours indicated that the experiences and views of these teachers is not a widely-explored area of research. The areas covered in this review of the literature include the available research from both an international and South African perspective, teachers' views on dealing with such behaviour in the classroom, teachers' views on the causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour and the perceived quality of the training that these teachers receive before having to work with children who display these kinds of behaviours.

2.2 Defining the key concepts

2.2.1 Oppositional and defiant behaviour

This research study focused on behaviours that can be described as oppositional and defiant in nature, not behaviours that are associated with the diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). A child who displays acts of purposeful defiance and opposition to an authority figure or towards his peers but has not been diagnosed with ODD would be described as exhibiting oppositional and defiant behaviours.

Defiance is not a commonly used term in both the past and present literature on educational systems and contexts, and when it is used it tends to refer to the criminal justice system and not to the school system (Sherman, 1993). Sherman (1993) argues that defiant behaviour can be the result of punishment that is perceived to be unfair or unjust. This is relevant to the educational context as learners who believe they are being unfairly punished may react in a defiant manner. Defiance can be defined as the act of "challenging and resisting everyone and everything" (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 1997, p. 295) and this is the challenging behaviour that many teachers in special needs schools face.

There is also limited use of the term "oppositional" in educational and psychological literature, except when it is linked with the concept of defiance to describe Oppositional

Defiant Disorder (ODD). Some studies of oppositional and defiant behaviour make use of the terms “resistant behaviour” (Richardson, 2014) and “disruptive behaviour” (Jacobsen, 2013) to describe the types of behaviours that can also be described as oppositional and defiant.

These behaviours include, but are not limited to: calling out when it is not the learner’s turn, wandering away from their desk, annoying other children, shouting unnecessarily, deliberate task avoidance, and frequent non-compliant behaviour (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). Other authors add the following behaviours: inability to follow directions, deliberately dropping objects to create a distraction, forgetting homework at home (Reda, 2007, cited in Richardson 2014, p. 12), emotional outbursts, denying responsibility for actions and teacher criticism (Walton, 2011, cited in Richardson 2014, p. 12).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5) (APA, 2013 p. 462-463), a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) can only be made under the following conditions:

A. A pattern of angry/irritable mood, argumentative/defiant behaviour, or vindictiveness lasting at least six months as evidenced by at least four symptoms from any of the following categories, and exhibited during interaction with at least one individual who is not a sibling.

Angry/Irritable Mood

1. Often loses temper.
2. Is often touchy or easily annoyed.
3. Is often angry and resentful.

Argumentative/Defiant Behaviour

4. Often argues with authority figures or, for children and adolescents, with adults.
5. Often actively defies or refuses to comply with requests from authority figures or with rules.
6. Often deliberately annoys others.
7. Often blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior.

Vindictiveness

8. Has been spiteful or vindictive at least twice within the past 6 months.

B. The disturbance in behaviour is associated with distress in the individual or others in his or her immediate social context (e.g., family, peer group, work colleagues), or it impacts negatively on social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

C. The behaviours do not occur exclusively during the course of a psychotic, substance use, depressive, or bipolar disorder. Also, the criteria are not met for disruptive mood dysregulation disorder.

The DSM-5 (APA, 2013, p. 462) further states that in order to differentiate between behaviours that are deemed to be normal, and those that fall within the criteria for a diagnosis of ODD, the persistence and frequency of the behaviours should be examined. The individual's level of development, culture and gender should also form part of the diagnosis process. It also states that the most common environment for the behaviours that meet the criteria is in the home. A difference can be drawn between the behaviours that meet the criteria for a diagnosis of ODD, and the behaviour described in this study as oppositional and defiant, based on the situation that the behaviours occur in, how many of the listed behaviours occur, and if they occur on a frequent and regular basis for a period of six months or longer. The oppositional and defiant behaviours discussed in this study are those that occur less frequently and are usually based on a triggering event or events within the classroom, or an interaction with a peer, but they do not meet the time frame or frequency for a diagnosis of ODD, and could be described more as traits of ODD.

A distinction, between ODD and the behaviours experienced by the teachers in this study, was necessary because many of the learners that were discussed by the teachers had not been diagnosed with ODD. They displayed the behaviours of ODD but did not meet the full criteria for diagnosis. In their discussion of difficulties in diagnosing ODD, Rowe, Maughan, Costello and Angold (2005, p.1313), state that when the DSM and formal assessment is utilised in the diagnosis process "substantial proportions of children referred to child psychiatric clinics do not meet criteria for any well-defined diagnosis". Learners in this study had displayed some of the behaviours described by the DSM but they had not received a diagnosis, and that made it necessary to differentiate between the disorder and the behaviours displayed by the learners.

2.2.2 Special needs education

Special needs education refers to a schooling system in which special schools “are schools equipped to deliver education to learners requiring high-intensive educational and other support, either on a full-time or a part-time basis” (Department of Education, 2008, p.3).

Special needs schools cater for those learners who do not appear to fit into the mainstream schooling system, either due to physical or intellectual barriers to learning. Learning programmes in special needs school are often based on Individualized Education

Programmes which provide a more focused and supportive educational structure for learners who experience barriers to learning.

Teachers in special needs schools are faced with unique challenges and additional stresses when compared to their mainstream colleagues. These teachers often have a diversity of learners, often of varying age groups, with a variety of barriers to learning, in one classroom (Jonker, 2005). This means that having a learner who displays oppositional and defiant behaviour in a special needs classroom, while having to cater for the high demands required by the other learners in the class, can add to the teachers’ burden. This additional pressure is unique to special needs teachers as the teacher may have to shift her attention away from the learners who need her attention to the learner who is being disruptive to the rest of the class. The current impetus of many governments around the world is towards a more inclusive form of education in which learners with barriers to learning, who are currently in special needs schools, can be incorporated in full service or mainstream schools. This may be challenging to implement as mainstream classes are bigger and the added demands on the mainstream teacher would be excessive, depending on the variety and number of special needs learners in the class. This is what the majority of the literature on special needs education, both locally and internationally tends to focus on. The literature on special needs education is usually related to how these learners can function in mainstream schools. There is a limited focus on how they can thrive, or how teachers can help them reach their potential while they are still in the special needs schools. The benefits of special needs schooling are a largely neglected area of study. The move towards inclusion may place some special needs learners, who benefit from the smaller classes and more individual attention, at a disadvantage. This leaves special needs teachers feeling that they have been forgotten and that their experiences and views are not important. McLean and Dixon (2006) found that teachers in isolated schools in Australia were under represented in the current academic literature and that the perspectives of these

teachers were limited. Erradu and Weeks (2013, p. 2) indicated that teachers in special needs schools require support as they are often expected to adapt and implement a more suitable curriculum for these learners, whilst managing the expectation from the Department of Education (DOE) to teach the same curriculum that is taught in mainstream classrooms.

Special needs education appears to be an under researched area. This may be due to the move towards inclusive education, which aims to utilise special needs schools as resource centres, while there is an increased need for special needs schools in society. However special needs schools are still in existence, both locally and internationally, and the limited research on these schools in favour of research on mainstream schools, fails to provide a clear picture of the perspectives and experiences of both teachers and learners in the special needs education system. A study by Jonker (2005) focused on the specific stresses that teachers in special needs schools experience and how they can maintain their physical and emotional wellness in one of the most stressful jobs that a person can do (Jonker, 2005).

2.2.2.1 Special needs education in the international context

The international literature tends to emphasise mainstream school settings, and there is a limited focus on special needs contexts. Special needs education is described as a difficult concept to define in the international literature (Spenceley, 2012; Vehmas, 2010, Wilson, 2002). This is because different criteria have been used to define the concept, such as moral viewpoints, political viewpoints and differing views on what constitutes a 'special need'. According to these authors, the definition has changed with the times and it has become a matter of each country using their own criteria to determine if a child is a special needs child and should be placed in the special needs schooling system. This is a subjective process with differences in the criteria that a child must meet before being categorized as a special needs learner. In England, special educational needs are defined as referring to children who "have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them" (Anders, Sammons, Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish & Siraj-Blatchford, 2011, p. 422). This definition does not appear to include those learners with physical impairments or behavioural problems that also influence their abilities in the school context. The apparent limited literature on special needs education in the international context appears to be linked to the worldwide shift towards a more inclusive system of education. This means that the focus tends to remain fixed on how mainstream teachers must adapt their strategies, classrooms and attitudes to accommodate special needs learners into their classrooms.

The limited literature on how teachers who are already in special needs schools experience the special needs context, as well as the challenges that they face in dealing with a wide variety of learner and teaching needs, may indicate that special needs education and special needs teachers are a neglected area of research. Much of the international research provides strategies for both mainstream and special needs teachers to make use of when teaching learners with barriers to learning, but there is a noticeable lack of research on the success of these strategies, and how teachers and learners experience the use of these strategies in the real-world context of their classrooms.

Special needs teachers face a different set of challenges than their mainstream colleagues and whilst these challenges are mentioned in the international literature, the focus still remains on the anticipated challenges that mainstream teachers will face or are currently facing in a more inclusive education system. The focus continues to shift away from the special needs education context and these teachers are almost silenced when it comes to sharing their experiences, challenges and successes.

2.2.2.2 Special needs education in South Africa

2.2.2.2.1 Pre-White Paper 6

White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system was introduced in 2001 by the South African Department of Education. It was created in order to address the segregation and discrimination of the past education system which stemmed from the apartheid era. Before the introduction of White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), learners were divided into separate systems of education based on their race and their disabilities or special needs.

The education system was a disjointed and segregated one, which allowed the government to assign funds and resources based on this segregation, and the traditional White mainstream schools benefitted the most from this discriminatory allocation. The Black, Indian and schools for the disabled were provided with significantly less funding and resources. The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) report (Department of Education, 1997) states that special needs schools in South Africa were largely run by church groups and were divided according to the disability they served, such as schools for the deaf

or schools for the blind. White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001, p.9) states that “in accordance with apartheid policy, schools that accommodated White disabled learners were extremely well-resourced, whilst the few schools for Black disabled learners were systematically under resourced”. This segregation of learners meant that while some learners were in an educationally advantageous system, other learners were disadvantaged, both academically and socially by the neglected and inferior system that they were exposed to.

The provision of special needs education before the introduction of White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), was based on a medical model (Department of Education, 1997) which placed labels on learners and the disabilities that they were experiencing. According to White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), only those learners who had been diagnosed with an organic disability had access to the special education system. Learners who experienced barriers to learning due to poverty or learning disorders were neglected in the special needs schooling system. This system of labelling further segregated special needs education, as learners who were given a label were placed in a school for that specific disability and that is where they remained. The effect of this is that some of these specifically defined schools still function and these learners still remain segregated from the larger education system.

2.2.2.2.2 Post White Paper 6

The introduction of White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) brought with it the idea of a more inclusive education system for all learners in South Africa. Special needs as a concept has been replaced with the concept “learners experiencing barriers to learning” by the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) report (Department of Education, 1997). These barriers to learning refer to aspects on multiple levels of the systems that impact on that child, and that may hinder or prevent him or her from reaching his or her full potential. These levels include individual factors, factors related to the curriculum, factors present in the teaching and learning environment as well as the home environment, and the larger social world of the learner (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2004). Special needs schools cater for learners with barriers to learning and provide the support that mainstream schools often cannot.

White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) brought with it the introduction of full service schools which allow learners with various barriers to learning to be included in the schooling system alongside learners that they were segregated from. It also brought the proposal of special needs schools as resource centres, which aimed to strengthen and expand the role special needs schools. The gradual implementation of the policy of inclusive education has been met with both criticism and positivity. It appears that while a move towards inclusion may promote an increased tolerance of the various barriers to learning within mainstream schooling and society, it may not be the most appropriate scenario or strategy for those learners who require and benefit from the special needs school environment, in which their physical, social and academic needs are catered for. The implementation of inclusive education is still in the early stages and currently, special needs schools continue to function as they did before the introduction of the inclusive education policy.

2.3 Research on oppositional and defiant behaviours in the classroom

Similar to the trend in the international literature, the literature in the South African context has a limited focus on special needs schools and tends to focus on oppositional and defiant behaviour in mainstream schools. Richardson (2014) focused on grade five teachers in mainstream schools and how teachers experience disruptive behaviours. Masekoameng (2010) focused on mainstream secondary schools in Limpopo and how disruptive behaviours influence teachers' motivation and morale. A study by Maphosa and Shumba (2010) showed that since the removal of corporal punishment in 1996, teachers in South African schools are finding it difficult to maintain classroom discipline using alternatives, and that learners themselves are becoming more defiant and disrespectful of the authority of the teacher. This study by Maphosa and Shumba (2010) gives a different perspective on how teachers experience defiant and oppositional behaviour in their classrooms, based on historical policy changes, and it describes the frustrations that teachers feel when dealing with learners who display this behaviour which is often seen as a lack of respect for the teachers.

Studies conducted on learners or teachers in classrooms where oppositional and defiant behaviour is experienced largely focus on mainstream educational environments. An Australian study (McLean & Dixon, 2006) focused on how ODD affects mainstream teachers

in their daily running of the classroom and the challenges that they face. These researchers conducted a qualitative study using multiple case studies, semi-structured interviews with teachers and reflective journals from two isolated schools and with four teachers in New South Wales. They found that additional support, including online support, is required for teachers who work with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour, particularly for those teachers who are in their first years of teaching. The teachers in this study indicated that they require this support due to the high emotional demands placed on them by learners who display these types of behaviours, and the reduction in available teaching time because of the learners' "erratic" (McLean & Dixon, 2006, p.57) and attention seeking behaviours. This shows how problematic dealing with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviours can be, as the teachers find that their emotional well-being and their capabilities to carry out their job, are often negatively influenced by these learners.

Richardson (2014) focused on grade five teachers in Gauteng mainstream schools and how teachers experience disruptive behaviours. In her study, Richardson conducted qualitative research through the use of focus group interviews and individual interviews. She conducted her research with fourteen grade five teachers to determine their understanding of resistant or disruptive behaviour, and their own experiences from the classroom situation regarding learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour. Richardson (2014, p.24) found that "most participants shared intolerant negative sentiments around their definition of what resistant behaviour is, apart from a few participants who perceived resistance as sometimes indicating creativity and/or independent thinking". She found that teachers who viewed these behaviours as a form of creativity also saw the potential for an undiscovered skill set in these learners and that teachers should help to build on these skills as learners' strengths. She made the recommendation that teachers need to consult with each other regarding dealing with these behaviours in the classroom in order to share knowledge on how to deal with the behaviours.

Jacobsen (2013) focused on the ways that educators deal with disruptive behaviour in mainstream elementary school classrooms, particularly with learners who have experienced trauma. She conducted a qualitative study using interviews with seven elementary school teachers in Minnesota. Jacobsen found that the disruptive behaviours experienced by teachers in the classroom were often displayed by those children who had experienced a traumatic event or events in their past. She also found that the teachers found the oppositional and

defiant behaviour of the younger learners to be directed at rule breaking and talking back while the older learners' behaviours were directed at gaining peer recognition and acceptance. Jacobsen also found that although referrals to mental health services were made by the teachers, these were often external to the school and she recommended the employment of more mental health professionals in schools in order to prevent teacher burnout or leaving the profession. This means that teachers who deal with these behaviours, experience stress and pressures that make their working environment a difficult situation and without the adequate support, the potential is there for them to leave the teaching profession.

Masekoameng (2010) focused on mainstream secondary schools in Limpopo and how disruptive behaviours influence teachers' motivation and morale. This study was quantitative and eighty-nine teachers from secondary schools in the Limpopo province completed the questionnaires. Masekoameng found that the majority of teachers in her study felt that they were having to work harder in their classrooms in order to deal with disruptive learners, and many of the teachers indicated that they would leave the teaching profession if an alternative employment position became available. She also found that teachers, in dealing with learners who display these behaviours, felt helpless in their classrooms and their morale as a professional was impacted negatively as a result. Dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in the classroom appears to be a negative experience for teachers, which leads to self-doubt and an unpleasant classroom environment, and to thoughts of leaving the profession.

Maphosa and Shumba (2010) conducted a qualitative study using interviews with three long serving and experienced teachers at a rural school in the Eastern Cape. These researchers explored teachers' perceived capability in dealing with poor discipline in their classrooms since the banning of corporal punishment in South Africa. They found that since the removal of corporal punishment in 1996, teachers in South African schools are finding it difficult to maintain classroom discipline using alternatives, and that learners themselves are becoming more defiant and disrespectful of the authority of the teacher.

2.4 Teachers' experiences in the classroom in relation to oppositional and defiant behaviours

The trend in international research, and particularly research from the USA, is to focus on ways of solving the “problem” of oppositional and defiant behaviour both in schools and in the home environment (Corrie, 2002; Cummings, 2000; Rogers, 2003). These studies give advice on how teachers should adapt their teaching and classroom management strategies to help learners who display these behaviours to cope better in the classroom. Some of these strategies include: building a true and lasting relationship with the learners, redirecting their behaviours towards more positive behaviours and role modelling appropriate behaviours. These studies do not however state the effectiveness of these strategies in practice. The literature on how to solve the problem of having to deal with oppositional and defiant learners in the classroom, does not adequately address the significance of the challenges that teachers face when dealing with these learners. This means that these behaviours are seen as simpler than they are in reality for the teachers who deal with them on a daily basis because they are given from an outsiders' perspective, and not from the perspective of the teachers themselves. There are no published studies, particularly in South Africa, on how special needs teachers themselves describe their own experiences of having learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms, and the international studies explored these experiences in mainstream schools.

Cochran, Gibbons, Spurgeon and Cochran (2014) interviewed teachers at a school in the United States that had a high volume of learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour. They found that these teachers experienced a high level of frustration. This frustration stemmed, from the feeling of being ineffective in the teaching of these learners, the amount of additional time being spent on these learners, and the disruption that it caused for the other learners in the classroom. Fields (2012, p.27) also reported teachers' experiences and stated that “oppositional-defiant behaviour challenges the authority of the teacher, makes teachers feel vulnerable, and often provokes teachers to respond aggressively to reassert their authority and control”. Both of these studies were conducted in mainstream schools, but it is likely that the same oppositional and defiant behaviours experienced in special needs classrooms can lead to special needs teachers having similar experiences. These studies show that dealing with oppositional and defiant learners can change the personality of the teacher, in making them react in ways that are unusual for them. This causes a problem for the

teachers, as their change in personality or mood influences the whole classroom environment and the other learners.

There are limitations, both locally and internationally, in the research regarding direct experiences of special needs teachers in relation to oppositional and defiant behaviour. Teachers' voices are not represented in the literature and the focus remains on mainstream teachers' and how they should be adapting to the more inclusive education system.

2.5 Teachers' views on the causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour

The international literature focuses on the sources of oppositional and defiant behaviours such as a difficult home life, bereavement, academic difficulties, low self-esteem, anxiety and trauma (Gargiulo, 2004; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Jensen, 2005; Kauffman, 2005, cited in Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008; Jacobsen, 2013). Andreou and Rapti (2010) conducted a study in Greece and found that teachers' "perceptions about the ownership of behaviour problems seem to have important implications for the referral to special education and the types of management of behaviour problems" (p. 54). They found that teachers who had been in the profession for many years and those that had just begun their teaching careers, tended to attribute the behavioural problems experienced by learners to external causes, such as the family, rather than to their own teaching style or classroom management abilities. This study showed that teachers tend to base their interventions and reactions to this type of behaviour on their views on the source of the behaviour and whether the learner is in control of his own behaviour or not.

The attribution of external factors as the cause of oppositional and defiant behaviour in learners is more commonly associated with those learners who display these behaviours regularly in the classroom, but who have not received a diagnosis of ODD. Richardson (2014) found that the teachers in her study attributed the oppositional and defiant behaviour to factors relating to the school environment and the anxiety that children felt in being at school. She indicated that learners who display these behaviours tend to have a fear of failure, fear of being embarrassed in front of their peers, and a feeling of inadequacy or lack of self-efficacy in some area of schooling. Smith and Bondy (2007, p152) state that "a student who behaves defiantly might be trying to get something, such as power, autonomy, status,

attention, or a sense of belonging. The student also might be trying to avoid something, such as an aversive task or person". These authors list additional causes of oppositional and defiant behaviours as teachers' reactions to inappropriate behaviour, the struggle for power in the classroom, excessively strict parenting styles, passive parenting styles, poverty and maternal behaviour before and after the pregnancy. There are many learners in special needs schools who also feel anxious about school work, or who seek attention from their teachers, but they do not act in an oppositional and defiant manner. The causes listed above apply to oppositional and defiant behaviour, but not all learners express themselves in this way.

There appears to be little focus on teachers' views regarding their own experiences with these behaviours or the assistance and support they receive in order to handle learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour. An exception to this is a study by Jacobsen (2013) who focused on how teachers, of elementary school age children in mainstream schools, experienced these behaviours, with a specific focus on how trauma influences the behaviour of the learners who are labelled as defiant. Jacobsen (2013) found that trauma, among other sources such as home life and parenting styles, was identified as a prominent source of disruptive behaviour and that this influenced how teachers experienced working with these learners in their classrooms. It also influenced how much use they made of mental health services in assisting with the classroom experience.

2.6 Teachers' views on the training received in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviours

Teachers in South Africa vary in how recently they received their initial teacher training. This plays an important role in how much training they received around the topic of behavioural problems that learners in their classes may exhibit. Those teachers who qualified more recently may have been exposed to a wider theoretical curriculum with the opportunity to personally study further and specialise in the specific disorders. Erradu and Weeks (2013), conducted a qualitative study in three special needs schools in Pietermaritzburg, focusing on the support that teachers can provide to intellectually impaired learners and some of the challenges that they face. These researchers indicate that teachers in special needs schools often have to adapt the curriculum to suit the learners in their classrooms and that little support and training is received from the DOE. They recommend higher quality and more frequent university courses with a focus on special needs education as well as more frequent

invitations and provision of workshops regarding teaching in the special needs classroom. Mohamed and Laher (2012) found in their study, of teachers in two Johannesburg schools, that the more experienced teachers felt that they were inadequately trained and that they placed more value on their own personal experiences, rather than their training in the profession. Mclean and Dixon (2006) found that the teachers in their study felt underprepared for having to deal with learners with oppositional and defiant behaviours even though they had been trained at a university. They indicated that they needed more training in the area of classroom management. Again, this is an under researched area. There appears to be limited literature, both locally and internationally on teachers' experiences and views of the adequacy and relevance of the training that they received both in their initial teacher training course and in any subsequent training they may have received. The above literature focused on the inadequacy of the training that the teachers had received both at university and through workshops, but the level of training or qualifications that they had received, and suggestions on how to improve the effectiveness of training in this area was not discussed. It is evident that more training is required, but a specific focus on what this training should cover is needed.

2.7 Theoretical perspective - Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1994) lists five systems that have an impact on and influence a person's development. The microsystem is the person's immediate environment and the interactions that occur within this environment, such as a school or a family environment or context. The mesosystem is the level at which two microsystems or settings are linked and include the common factor of the person in both settings such as the link between home and school. The exosystem involves events or links in at least one setting in which the person is not directly involved in such as the link between school and the neighbourhood context. The macrosystem includes the person's cultural beliefs and lifestyle, such as following a particular religion or being part of a particular ethnic group. The chronosystem involves the changes experienced by the person during a time period in their lives, or a specific period of history that they have been part of. These five systems interact during the person's development.

In the context of teachers in special needs classrooms who deal with oppositional and defiant learners and behaviours in their classroom, the microsystem would be the special needs classroom that they teach in. This system is linked to a larger system which the teacher also forms part of, which is the special needs school that they teach in. This would be the mesosystem. The exosystem of teachers in this context would be the neighbourhood in which the school is situated as the teacher is indirectly influenced by her surroundings in both close and distant proximity from the school. The macrosystem that would influence the special needs teacher would be special needs schooling system which is influenced by the policy makers and the DOE. Finally, the chronosystem, more specifically for a teacher who has been in the profession for many years, would be the changes that the special needs education system has undergone and the changes that the policy of Inclusive Education may still bring for the context of special needs education. At this current time in history, disability has now become an aspect of learner's life that is no longer seen as inside that learner, but rather it is seen as a barrier to learning that is external to the learner. Inclusive Education, as indicated in White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), aims to include all learners in the schooling system by addressing these barriers to learning.

Bronfenbrenner's theory provides a guide for this study as the special needs teachers find themselves in the unique system of special needs education and this over-arching system contains many layers and systems that influence the development and experiences of the special needs teacher. Each of the systems indicated by Bronfenbrenner (1994) interact with both the individual and the environment in which the individual finds themselves, and it allows for the individual to be viewed and understood in a more holistic manner. A deeper and more holistic understanding of the experiences and context of the special needs teacher is required in this study, particularly in relation to the interaction that these teachers have with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory provides a theoretical background from which the context of the special needs teacher can be understood.

This theory relates to the research questions that guide this study. The teachers' experiences when dealing with these learners can be related to the microsystem, as it is in the teachers' own classroom that these behaviours occur and it is here that the teacher has the most interaction with these learners. The teachers' experiences can also be related to the mesosystem as it is within the whole school environment that the teachers gain experience in

dealing with these learners, through their own actions in the classroom and through the advice and experience of other members of staff. The research question regarding the effective and ineffective methods that teachers use when dealing with oppositional and defiant learners also finds relevance in the ecological systems theory. This relates to the exosystem as the causes of the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour may stem from the learners' home environment and this could influence the strategies that teachers choose to use in dealing with these learners and the levels of success that the teachers may find with each strategy. It also relates to the chronosystem as the teachers gain more experience with the passage of time and years of teaching and they may find that they have a larger repertoire of strategies that they can use in dealing with these learners. The final question relates to the teachers' views of the adequacy and relevance of their training. Bronfenbrenner's microsystem applies to this question as the quality of the teachers' training is evident in each teachers' individual classroom and with the learners in this classroom. The chronosystem also applies to the question of the quality of the training received by the teachers as the teachers gain more experience the longer that they teach and they have the opportunity to complete additional qualifications.

2.8 Rationale and aim

The research questions in this study are: What are teachers' in special needs schools experiences with oppositional and defiant behaviour? What methods do these teachers find effective or ineffective in dealing with learners with oppositional and defiant behaviour? What are these teachers' views on the relevance and adequacy of their training in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour? The perspectives and experiences of teachers is an under researched area of study and as professionals who work with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour, their voices should be heard. A review of the literature appears to indicate that the voices of teachers is not represented, both locally and internationally, and this study aims to provide major role-players in these learners' lives with the opportunity to have their experiences documented.

2.9 Conclusion

The review of the available literature on teachers' experiences of dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms revealed a need for more focused and specific research in this area. Much of the research pertained to mainstream schools and

tended to focus on strategies for dealing with these behaviours in the classroom. There was a limited focus on teachers' experiences of having to deal with these behaviours in the classroom, particularly in the special needs classroom. Much of the available literature on the topic stemmed from international literature with very few South African studies being available for review.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Background

This research study focused on teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms. I chose to focus on the special needs educational context because of the years that I spent working in this environment. I have witnessed and had to deal with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom and on the playground. I noticed that each teacher dealt with a specific learner differently when the learner displayed these types of behaviours, some with a stricter approach and some with a softer approach. I also noticed the level of frustration and hopelessness that some teachers felt when every attempt that they made to deal with these learners ended in failure, and an increase in oppositional and defiant behaviours. I felt that teachers needed an opportunity to voice their concerns, experiences and feelings regarding dealing with these learners and that is why this study was conducted.

As the literature review revealed, there is a lack of research generally in special needs settings; there is even less research on teachers' experiences in those settings; and there is no published research regarding managing these behaviours in special needs classrooms. Whilst some research has been published on these behaviours in mainstream classes, these studies did not include the added layer of stresses that are inherent in special needs settings.

3.2 Research questions

This study examined how teachers experienced specific classroom behaviours that fall under the general category of oppositional and defiant behaviours, how they dealt with these behaviours in the classroom, and how they viewed the adequacy of their training in dealing with these learners. The following research questions were addressed by this study:

1. What are teachers' in special needs schools experiences with oppositional and defiant behaviour?
2. What methods do these teachers find effective or ineffective in dealing with learners with oppositional and defiant behaviour?
3. What are these teachers' views on the relevance and adequacy of their training in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour?

3.3 Research design

A qualitative study was used to explore teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour in their special needs classrooms. A qualitative study was chosen because this approach gave a voice to a wide variety of perspectives on the issue and it allowed for an examination into the many layers and aspects of that issue (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). A qualitative study was selected over a quantitative study due to the depth of data required, as Trafimow (2014, p.15) states, some qualitative researchers believe that "quantitative methods are lacking in descriptive richness, and it is more than worthwhile to give up some quantitative rigor in favor of increased descriptive richness". This study can be described as an exploratory study. Durrheim (cited in Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p.44) states that "exploratory studies are used to make preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. They employ an open flexible and inductive approach to research as they attempt to look for new insights into phenomena". This applied to this study as the limited research available on the topic of teachers' experiences of dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms indicated that this area of research could be described as a relatively unexplored area of research.

More specifically, this study was interpretive because it focused on "the subjective understandings and experiences of individuals" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p.278) and it allowed the respondents to be treated as "though they were the origin of their thoughts, feelings and experiences" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p.278). The interpretive approach was appropriate for this research study, as it explored how teachers experience these behaviours from their own perspectives. The teachers had the opportunity to express their own feelings and thoughts on the issue of these behaviours in their classrooms. The teachers were asked about experiences that were personal to them and this provided the "rich experiential data" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p.39) that is associated with the interpretive approach to research. The data gathered from this approach was placed and understood within the context of special needs education. This allowed me to interpret the data from within this context and to gain a closer proximity to the data gathered.

3.4 Research sites

The research sites for this study were three special needs schools in Pietermaritzburg. Two of the schools catered for learners who have been classified as severely mentally handicapped and are referred to as schools for the SMH (severely mentally handicapped). The third school was a LSEN (learners with special needs) school that caters for more able learners who still have needs that are too great for mainstream schooling, such as Autism, physical disability, specific learning disorders and attention deficit disorders.

The first school caters for learners with severe mental handicaps. This school does not use a grade system for their learners and the classes are based on similar age learners. The school has 225 children in attendance with one teacher per classroom and in some cases, a teacher assistant in the classroom. The classes for the learners on the Autism Spectrum consist of on average nine learners and the Junior Primary and Senior primary classes consist of an average of 14 to 17 learners.

The second school also caters for learners with severe mental handicaps. This school divides their classes according to the ages of the learners rather than using a grade system. The school has 305 children in attendance, with an age range from four years old to eighteen years old. The school has 22 classes, including an ECD unit, five Junior Primary classes, nine Intermediate Phase classes, seven Senior Phase classes and two classes for learners on the Autism Spectrum. The school has 22 teachers and 12 teacher assistants. The class sizes range from six to sixteen learners.

The third school works on a grade system and goes up to Grade 7, but from Grade 4 the classes are divided into learners in the skills programme, and learners who are following the CAPS curriculum but at a lower grade than their mainstream peers. There are thirteen teachers and 135 children at the school. The class sizes are on average eleven children per class with one teacher per class.

These three schools, which served as the research sites, were chosen by myself as I had worked at the one school for a number of years. The two SMH schools were closely affiliated to the above school, as many of the learners have moved between the three schools and all the schools cater for learners with special needs of varying severities.

3.5 Participants and sampling technique

Permission was applied for and received from the Department of Education (see Appendix A) and the UKZN Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: HSS/0495/015M) (see Appendix B). Following ethical clearance, a letter was sent to the principals of the three special needs schools in Pietermaritzburg requesting permission to conduct the study in their schools (see Appendix C). Upon receiving permission from these principals, I met with the principals of two of the schools and the secretary of the third school. The Deputy Principal at the first school, the Principal at the second school and the Deputy Principal at the third school asked the teachers on their staff if they would like to participate in the study. Those teachers that indicated their interest were then selected and put forward by the Principal and two Deputy Principals. The identified teachers in the schools were then provided with an information sheet (see Appendix D). This detailed the purpose of this study and those teachers that had had experience with these learners in their classrooms were invited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Those who volunteered to participate met with myself and were given informed consent forms (see Appendix E) to complete which assured them of confidentiality. I sought and received a sample of nine teachers, three from each special needs school for the final study. More teachers than were required had indicated their willingness to participate in the study, if other teachers left the study.

The sample was purposive as the focus was on those teachers who had experience in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants that provide appropriate examples of the population that is being studied (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). In this study, the population being studied needed to have had actual experience with these learners in the classroom and they needed to work in special needs schools, this is why the purposive sampling method was selected. This sampling technique also produced information rich cases during data collection. The teachers were knowledgeable about the topic being explored and were able to give views based on their own classroom experiences with this behaviour.

3.6 Data collection

A self-designed semi structured interview schedule (see Appendix F) was used. Previous studies (Venkataramani, 2012; Richardson, 2014; Nene, 2013), that were similar to this study, served as a guide for the types of questions that were included in my own interview schedule. These questions were adapted to suit the context of the special needs classroom. The interview was conducted with each of the nine teachers. The interview focused on their experiences of dealing with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom, and the quality of the training that they had received in their initial teacher training course.

Semi structured interviews involve asking preplanned questions with the opportunity of asking for clarification, or for further spontaneous questions to be asked, in order to understand the participants' comments on a deeper level (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). This type of interview was relevant to this study because, while the interview needed to elicit some specific information from the participants, the focus was also on their own personal experiences in the classroom. The opportunity needed to be available to the participants to elaborate on their responses to the interview questions. An audio recording of the teachers' responses was obtained to aid in the transcription of the data, and permission for this was given by the participants in the form of a consent sheet (see Appendix G).

Other data collection methods, such as a questionnaire, observation and focus groups were considered when choosing the most appropriate method of obtaining the required data. A questionnaire was not selected as a data collection tool as it would not have provided the volume and richness of data required, and it would not have given the participants the opportunity to voice their opinions and experiences as completely as they could have through a personal interview. The tool of observation was not used as my presence in the classroom would have influenced the behaviour of the learners and this would have made my experience of the learners' behaviour more of the focus, rather than the focus being on the teachers' own experiences of the oppositional and defiant behaviour. Focus groups were also considered, however I felt that the teachers would be more open if taking part in a one on one interview session, rather than having to talk about their personal experiences in front of a group of other teachers. The interview was also selected as the most appropriate data collection tool as it

was suitable to the time that the teachers had available, and it did not take up their teaching time.

The data was collected in the teachers' classrooms at the two SMH schools and in the boardroom of the third school. The interviews took place after school at the two SMH schools and during teachers' free periods or breaks at the third school. Times were organized in advance with the teachers. The interviews took on average thirty minutes.

3.7 Data analysis

The data produced in this study was of an experiential nature and took the form of participants' personal opinions and experiences. This necessitated the use of interpretive data analysis which Leedy and Ormrod (2014) describe as a process of identifying themes that are common to the participants' explanations of their own experiences. They also state that the diversity of the participants' experiences must be given a voice in the same way that the common themes are given a voice.

In order to analyse the data obtained from the participants, the transcribed data was categorized and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify both the common and diverse experiences and opinions of the participants, which were then categorized into prominent themes. Thematic analysis was selected as the most appropriate data analysis method. Discourse analysis and narrative analysis were considered as alternative methods but were not selected, as the focus of the data was not on the specific words used in the interview process or on how the participants spoke during the interview process. The focus of the data was the experiences of the teachers and this suited the thematic analysis method.

Braun and Clarke (2006) list six phases of thematic analysis. Phase one is familiarizing yourself with the data. I transcribed the data from the audio recordings of the interviews myself and read the data to gain an idea of the content. The data was read on numerous occasions in order to make the data more familiar to myself and to get an informed understanding of the experiences expressed by the participants of the study. Phase two involves generating initial codes, and I divided the data into relevant codes which were based

on what features the data produced. These initial codes were based on and guided by the research questions of the study.

Phase three is searching for themes and in this phase I examined the selected codes in order to find themes in the data and this data was placed under the relevant themes. These themes were also guided by the research questions of the study and data that fell outside of these themes were used to create new themes. Phase four involves reviewing themes, I refined the themes and ensured that the relevant data suited the themes they fell under. I began the process of moving data into more relevant themes and I combined some of the themes in which data that was similar. Phase five involves defining and naming themes, I further refined the themes and looked for possible sub-themes and built the story that the data provided. I changed some of the names of the themes and sub-themes to incorporate the relevant data under the correct theme and to assist in the linking of themes and sub-themes. The final phase is the production of the report in which I synthesized the themes and sub-themes and wrote a final commentary on the analyzed themes. This commentary consisted of links between the themes and was largely based on the research questions that guided this study.

3.8 Ethical issues

Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) indicated that there are eight practical principles to be considered when examining the ethics of a research study. These practical principles are: collaborative partnership, social value, scientific validity, fair selection of participants, favourable risk/benefit ratio, independent ethics review, informed consent and ongoing respect for participants and study communities. Allmark, Boote, Chambers, Clarke, McDonnell, Thompson & Tod (2009), focused on ethical considerations that are specific to the use of in-depth interviews. These considerations are in line with those identified by Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) with the addition of a “dual role and over-involvement” (p.7).

3.8.1 Collaborative partnership

This study was conducted with the participating community in mind. The teachers are the ones who deal with oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms. This research was conducted as a result of a need within the special needs educational situation to better

understand these behaviours and to explore the experiences of these teachers in dealing with these behaviours.

3.8.2 Social value

The special needs teachers and the special needs education system will hopefully benefit from this research as it intends to provide teachers with possible ways to address these behaviours in their classrooms. It has also highlighted the experiences that teachers have in dealing with these behaviours and given them a voice regarding their training and everyday classroom experiences.

3.8.3 Scientific validity

The methods used in this research study were justifiable and led to a level of trustworthiness. This in turn led to the results being credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. The use of a semi structured interview allowed the participants to voice their opinions without restriction. The use of purposive sampling ensured that relevant and knowledgeable participants were selected for this study.

3.8.4 Fair selection of participants

The participants were selected based on their experiences of oppositional and defiant behaviours in the classroom. The research questions of this study were applicable to these participants and those that felt that they had the relevant experiences were given the opportunity to volunteer to take part in the study.

3.8.5 Favourable risk/benefit ratio

Leedy and Ormrod (2014) refer to this ethical consideration as “protection from harm” (p.107) and they say that any physical or psychological harm should be avoided and that the benefits of the study should outweigh the risks to the participants. The burden on the participants of this study was minimal as the subject of the interviews was based on their practical experiences. The participants were informed of the option of declining to take part in the study or to remove themselves from the study at any time. The participants were also informed of access to the Child and Family Centre at UKZN should the need for counselling have arisen at any point during the study. The benefit of the study for the participants was the

improved knowledge of successful strategies in dealing with these behaviours and the opportunity to voice their concerns and experiences.

3.8.6 Independent ethics review

Permission was obtained from both the Department of Education and the UKZN Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: HSS/0495/015M) before the commencement of the data collection process.

3.8.7 Informed consent

Leedy and Ormrod (2014) also discuss the need for participation in the study to be voluntary and informed. They say that the participants must be aware of what the study entails and their right to leave the study at any time or to refuse to take part in the study. All participants were informed of the scope of the study and the fact that the interview would be recorded for transcription purposes. The participants signed consent forms for both the interview and for the audio recording of the interview.

3.8.8 Ongoing respect for participants and study communities

Leedy and Ormrod (2014) add the “right to privacy” (p.109) to this ethical consideration and they state that the participants must be assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were assured of confidentiality and that they could choose to leave the study at any point during the study. Their names and the names of their schools were not used in this research study. The participants were treated with respect during the interview process and I ensured that the participants were agreeable to the times set for their interview sessions.

3.8.9 Dual role and over-involvement

Allmark et al. (2009) indicate that, during the interview process, the interviewer must avoid moving between the role of a researcher and a therapist and becoming too involved in the responses of the participants. The participants in this study did feel free to share personal stories and the feelings that these stories and experiences evoked. The participants were not engaged in any counselling during the interview and the focus on the interview questions was maintained in order to obtain the most relevant data for the study.

3.9 Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

3.9.1 Credibility

Shenton (2004) indicates that credibility in qualitative research involves making every effort to present an accurate and true picture of the phenomenon or topic being studied. The credibility of the study was enhanced by the use of an interview schedule that explored the concepts and themes that it intended to explore. Previous studies of a similar nature were examined in order to guide the formulation of relevant questions for the interview schedule. A process of peer review was used to ensure that a trustworthy and true picture of the data emerged. The interview method used during data collection was described in detail, negative cases were included in the reporting of the results of the study and the participants own words were transcribed verbatim and included in the write up of the results of the study to enhance the credibility of this study. Participants were also informed of their right to refuse to take part in the study and to withdraw from the study at any point. This enhanced the credibility of the study, as the participants voluntarily took part in the study and were willing to share their honest experiences. Patton (1990, cited in Shenton, 2004, p.68) states that “the credibility of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research as it is the person who is the major instrument of data collection and analysis”. My credibility as a researcher was enhanced by my practical experience obtained in Special Needs Schools during the course of her work in these environments. Silverman (2000, cited in Shenton, 2004, p.69) states that “the ability of the researcher to relate his or her findings to an existing body of knowledge is a key criterion for evaluating works of qualitative enquiry”. An examination of previous research findings of similar projects enhanced the credibility of the study as it allowed for a comparison of the findings.

3.9.2 Transferability

Shenton (2004) states that in order for the criteria of transferability to be increased, a detailed and vivid description of the context of the study should be provided in order to allow the reader to make an informed decision as to whether the study matches or can be applied to another similar situation. Bitsch (2005, cited in Anney, 2014, p.277) states that the “researcher facilitates the transferability judgement by a potential user through ‘thick description’ and purposeful sampling”. The findings in this study are not generalizable, as the sample size was small, and these participants do not speak for all special needs teachers who experience these behaviours in the classroom. However, the sample was purposeful in that

only teachers who had experience in dealing with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviours were asked to take part in the study. To increase the transferability of the study, a detailed descriptive account (Terre Blanche et al, 2006) of the research process, context and situation was given in order to provide as much information as possible as a link to similar research and research contexts.

3.9.3 Dependability

Shenton (2004, p.63) states that “the meeting of the dependability criterion is difficult in qualitative work, although researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study”. The results of this study are not repeatable as the classroom is a social context that is constantly changing. Although the classroom situation may change in the future, the findings of this study should remain relevant as these behaviours can be found in many classrooms in South Africa. Shenton (2004, p.71) says that in order to improve the dependability of the study “the processes in the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results”. The dependability of the study was enhanced through descriptions of how the data was collected and analysed, and the context in which the data was collected. A description of the interview method used was provided to illustrate how the data was obtained so that the reader can know that the findings were obtained appropriately, but that the context was not a static and repeatable one.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Shenton (2004) indicates that in order to obtain confirmability, the views expressed in the study should represent the view of the participants and not the views of the researchers themselves. He further states that the decision that were made in the study regarding the data collection methods, any challenges faced as a result of such decisions and the reasons for selecting this particular data collection method over other available methods should be described in order to show how the beliefs of the researcher may have influenced the study. I was an outside enquirer during the interview process as it was the opinions of the teachers that provided the data for this study. I have had experience in Special Needs Schools but limited experience in teaching learners who displayed these behaviours. The interview method was selected over questionnaires and observations because I sought the opinions and perspectives of the teachers involved in their own descriptive words. The study displayed a

level of confirmability, as another researcher could obtain similar opinions and responses if the same interview schedule was used. I used reflexivity to examine my approach to the research and the context in which the research was conducted and this allowed for the process to be more descriptive and open to the readers.

3.10 Researcher reflexivity

Krefting (1991, cited in Anney, 2014, p.279) describes reflexivity as “an assessment of the influence of the investigator’s own background, perceptions and interests on the qualitative research process”. Schwandt (1997, cited in Kleinsasser, 2000, p.155) describes researcher reflexivity in two ways, firstly as “the process of critical self-reflection on one’s biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences”. The second description is, as “an acknowledgement of the inquirer’s place in the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand and a means for a critical examination of the entire research process” (p.155).

Researcher reflexivity is a significant aspect of the research process as it allows the researcher to examine their own biases, opinions and thoughts on an issue and how these may have influenced both the data collection process and the analysis of the data. It is important to show how the research process was changed or influenced by who the researcher is a person, their previous experiences and their views on the world. A different researcher may have brought an entirely different perspective to the same research project and this would have altered the focus and results of the study. Researcher reflexivity also enhances the credibility of the study as it displays an honesty from the researcher. My reflexivity as a researcher is discussed below.

I have had experience at a special needs school and have observed some of the behaviours and learners mentioned by the teachers. During the interview process, it was a challenge to refrain from agreeing with the respondent or adding to their responses with my own knowledge or experience. This may have influenced some of the responses received from the teachers. My background in special needs may also have influenced the omission of information as the teachers may have made the assumption that I was more knowledgeable than I was with regard to special needs. My experience in special needs may also have had a positive influence on rapport building with the participants as I was aware of some of their experiences.

During the data collection process, I attempted to refrain from commenting from my own personal experience in response to the participants' comments. I made the effort to avoid agreeing or disagreeing with the participants. When the participants had made an assumption about my knowledge regarding special needs education, I made the effort to ask for clarification from the participants to ensure that there was a mutual understanding of the content of their responses. During the data analysis process, it was difficult to remove myself and my perspective from the responses of the participants. I made the effort to view each of the participants' responses as independent of my own experiences and views by looking at each of their responses as falling into a certain theme or category, rather than associating the response with a specific personal experience.

3.11 Limitations of study/problems faced during data collection

The use of a qualitative research design increased the depth and extent of the data gathered from the participants. This larger body of quality data would not have been attained through the use of a quantitative research design. The richness of the data collected from the interviews allowed for a deeper understanding of special needs teachers' experiences of these particular behaviours. This made the data more challenging to work with as the responses were in the form of subjective views and opinions, rather than in quantities and numbers. The use of semi structured interviews may have led to some elements of the subject of the study being neglected, but this design allowed for additional relevant information to be collected as I saw necessary. The sample size of this study may be considered too small for the purposes of transferability as the sample did not represent all the special needs teachers in Pietermaritzburg, but due to time constraints on both myself and the schools in terms of making time for the interviews, this sample size appeared to be expansive enough to gain the required level of data saturation which was achieved by the ninth participant.

It was initially thought that it may prove difficult to recruit teachers who have had the relevant experience with learners who displayed these behaviours and who would be willing to give of their time to complete the interviews, however more teacher than were required offered to take part in the study. It was also thought that the study may need to be expanded beyond the intended schools, however this was not the case as all nine participants were available in the original three schools. An unforeseen challenge of the interview process was that some of the interviews were conducted with learners in the classroom or interview space

as these learners either get collected by their parents from their classroom or they stay at the boarding establishment. This posed a challenge when it came to hearing the responses of the teachers involved in both the interview itself and while listen to the audio recordings. The presence of the learners in the classroom during the interviews may have limited the openness and detail of the responses received from the teachers. The teachers may have shortened their responses to avoid the children in the classroom being able to identify specific children that were being used as examples.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the methods used to obtain the data on this study. A qualitative research design was chosen. A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data and the sample was purposive as the participants were required to have experienced oppositional and defiant behaviours in their classrooms. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The trustworthiness of the study and the limitations of the study were also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This study explored teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms. This chapter serves to present the findings of the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted in this study.

The following themes were identified in the data: Teachers' experiences of oppositional and defiant behaviour; ineffective methods of dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour, effective methods of dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour, teachers' views of the causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour, and teachers' views of the adequacy and relevance of their training. These were further broken down into subthemes as detailed in the table below:

Table 1: Themes and subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Teachers' experiences of dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration • Disruption of teaching time • Demotivation
Ineffective methods of dealing with oppositional defiant behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending to the learner too soon • Punishment • Vague or unmotivated instructions • Giving work • Shouting and being emotional • Removal from class • Nothing has been successful
Effective methods of dealing with oppositional defiant behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Allowing the learner to calm down • Return to previous successes • Give reasons for instructions • Negotiation • Individualised punishments • Consequences • Removal of privileges • Changing the tone of voice • Focus on specific behaviour • Building a relationship with the learner
Teachers' views on the causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family structure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective early handling/spoiling • Working parents • Combination of factors • Disorders and frustration • Television and boundaries
Teachers' views on the adequacy and relevance of their training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of initial teacher training • Value of experience • Suggestions

4.2 Participant demographics

The following table provides information about the participants that were involved in this study:

Table 2: Demographics of study participants

Participant	Gender	Number of years teaching	Number of years in a special needs school
C1	F	32	30
C2	F	20	2
C3	F	44	25
D1	M	3	1
D2	F	35	8
D3	F	17	13
E1	F	14	3
E2	M	20	19
E3	F	9	9

The participants in this study were mostly female, with seven of the participants being female and two being male. The participants varied in the number of years that they had been teaching both in mainstream and in special needs education with many of the participants having taught in a mainstream school before moving to a special needs school, with the exception of Participant E3 who began her teaching career in a special needs school. Most of the participants had been qualified teachers for many years, while two of the participants had qualified in the last ten years. Participants C1, C3, D3 and E2 had spent most of their teaching careers in a special needs school. A discussion of the identified themes and sub-themes based on the results of the study will follow.

4.3 Teachers' experiences of dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour

4.3.1 Frustration

The respondents in this study reported feeling frustrated when having to deal with learners in their class who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The levels of frustration varied between participants, but all except Participant D3 indicated having felt frustrated at one point in time in their dealings with these learners. The participants described their feelings of frustration in relation to how the previous progress of these learners could be reversed, despite the teachers' efforts and their reactions to the other learners in the class due to the time spent with the oppositional and defiant learners in the class. They also discussed the oppositional and defiant behaviours that frustrated them and the invasion of their free time during the day in having to deal with these learners. There was however one participant, Participant D3, who indicated that she did not experience feelings of frustration as she was able to anticipate the behaviour of the learners.

4.3.1.1 Specific pattern of oppositional and defiant behaviours

The learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour tended to display a specific pattern of these behaviours, as identified by the teachers. The participants mentioned examples of these behaviours that they had experienced in their own classrooms. Many of these listed behaviours were similar across the participants. These behaviours led to feelings of frustration for the teachers as the learners appeared to deliberately do the opposite of what had been asked of them, or they deliberately went against what the teacher was saying. This may have led to possible feeling of demotivation as the teachers may have felt that they were not able to help the learners or guide them in the right direction. The frustration felt in seeing these behaviours in the classroom was also associated with the use of ineffective strategies, as the teachers felt that they had achieved minimal success with these learners.

Participant E2 gave examples of the types of oppositional and defiant behaviour that frustrated him in the classroom. He said:

they could laugh at you in your face when you give them an instruction, they don't take what you're saying to them seriously enough, umm, when you do reprimand them, even on a one to one basis they laugh, they would walk away, they would run away.

4.3.1.2 Previous achievements reversed

The teachers felt that the work that they had done in helping the learners was often reversed when the learner returned to their previous behaviours. This led to feelings of frustration due to the time and effort that they had invested in these learners. As participants C1 and C2 indicated, it could be difficult to understand that the learners' behaviours should not be taken personally by the teachers. The feeling of demotivation felt by the teachers, indicated below, could have increased this frustration and feeling that the learners had disappointed their teachers by returning to their previous behaviours. The teachers may also have felt frustrated that the methods they used to deal with these learners, which had previously been successful, now proved to be unsuccessful. As discussed later in this chapter, this frustration may have led the teachers to have to rely on their experience and on a process of trial and error when they created new strategies to deal with these learners.

Participant C2 reported the following in having dealt with these learners and their behaviours:

It's very frustrating because there days when you think that you've really like made progress and you, or weeks could even go by and you think wow, you know this time a month ago, or six months ago or a year ago, this kid would have reacted in this way but then the very next day, ja, they just drop the ball and then you kind of feel like you're back to square one.

Similarly, participant E1, referred to the frustration he felt when the learners showed improvement one day and then shortly after went back to their previous behaviours. He said:

Can be quite frustrating, so every day is a different level of success or level of failure with that learner. Because some days the learner will come ready to, from the moment they step into the school, right to the last minute of the day and they step out, it's throughout the day like this way and then some days they will come in the morning, they'll be behaving and you think success and then at a certain time they just switch over and then it's completely chaotic.

4.3.1.3 Reactions towards other learners in the class

Some of the participants found that their teaching time in the classroom was disturbed by having to deal with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This influenced how they dealt with the other learners in the class, due to their feelings of frustration. The teachers became agitated with the other learners because of their shortened temper and their anger at the oppositional and defiant learner. The teachers also felt frustrated that they often had to focus most of their attention on the one learner, while they neglected the rest of the learners in the class. This feeling of frustration led to the feelings of

demotivation mentioned later in this chapter, as the teacher may have believed that she had not acted in the best interests of the other learners in the class when she gave her attention to the one learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour.

Participant D1 mentioned how the frustration that he felt in dealing with these learners impacted on the rest of the class and the teaching time spent with his classes. He said that:

I think if you have a large number of these learners it will become tedious, uh, it can be frustrating, testing your patience and it's going to impact how you respond to the rest of your learners, if you're agitated then you're gonna be less patient towards assisting learners with their problems.

Participant E1 indicated a similar feeling in reference to a specific learner in her class and how it impacted on the amount of time she had available to spend on other learners. She said that:

Sometimes it's very frustrating, especially as I don't have an assistant. So, that's my main problem because he sits next to me, all the time I have to be with him when he's doing his work, I must remind him, do your work, he always talk, he's always picking on the other kids so he gets most of my, my attention, but then I've got other 11.

4.3.1.4 Impact on teachers' free time

Having dealt with a learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom and on the playground, was indicated as frustrating by one of the participants. He said that on occasion his free time during the day was disturbed by having to deal with those learners from his class who had created problems on the playground. Participant E2 spoke about the frustration he felt when the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour impacted on his school day. He said that:

If that learner is in my class, it's my problem, and if that learner's misbehaving during break time, they call for the teacher, namely myself, so I have to give up my break to sort the learner out.

4.3.1.5 Lack of frustration

While the majority of the teachers expressed the frustration that they felt, Participant D3 indicated that she had not experienced frustration with these learners as she was able to anticipate their behaviours each day. This emphasised the importance of the value that the teachers placed in their experience, as discussed further in the chapter. This participant was able to use her experience of the learners and their behaviours to limit her frustration levels.

Participant D3 indicated that she felt that the classroom experience was less frustrating for her. She said that:

...because I understand them and each and every day I'm expecting that behaviour to each and every one.

The theme of frustration experienced by the teachers in this study was a dominant theme and it appeared evident in both their words and their body language during the interview process. The teachers felt frustrated when their previous successes were undone and the learners returned to their previous oppositional and defiant behaviours. This frustration influenced their reactions to the other learners in the class, particularly when they had to spend the majority of their teaching time dealing with one learner rather than all of the learners in the class. The participants spoke of the behaviours that led to feelings of frustration and the burden of having had to sacrifice their free time in having dealt with these learners. This burden extended beyond the classroom, with the teachers having intervened during break times and after school. The teachers expressed frustration at having had to continue their management of the learners' behaviours, even when other teachers were on duty and the learner was outside of the classroom. The participants indicated that having dealt with these learners on a regular basis led to them feeling frustrated and often led to them feeling angry with these learners. This showed that having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour increased the difficulty of the teachers' jobs, and influenced how they dealt with both the oppositional and defiant learners and the other learners in the class. This proved to be a negative experience for most of the teachers. Another source of frustration, and a negative experience described by the teachers, was the amount of teaching time that was disrupted by having to deal with oppositional and defiant learners in the classroom, this will be discussed below.

4.3.2 Disruption of teaching time

The participants indicated that much of their whole class teaching time was often disrupted by having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This was either through having removed themselves and the learner from the classroom, or having dealt with the behaviour of the other learners in the class as a result of how they reacted to the oppositional and defiant learner. The participants also discussed how the behaviour of these learners impacted on the rest of the children in the class and how it made it difficult to continue to teach these other learners. They also indicated how the classroom environment

and the teaching of the curriculum were disrupted by having had to deal with oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms.

4.3.2.1 Impact on other learners

The participants indicated that the learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour often influenced how the other learners in the class reacted. The other learners were put at a disadvantage by these learners as the teacher struggled to maintain order in her classroom and to contain both the oppositional and defiant learner and the other learners in the class at the same time. A great deal of time was spent distracting the other learners in order to de-escalate the situation or attending to the other learners who either reprimanded the disruptive child or who became upset at his or her behaviour.

Participant C1 indicated that she found it difficult to work with the other children in the class when the oppositional and defiant learner displayed aggression. She said that:

Well, it's very very disruptive, uh, it's virtually impossible to, umm, have the other children in the class while this child is so aggressive.

Participant C2 spoke of the challenges she faced in trying to distract the other learners in the class when she was disciplining the oppositional and defiant child. She said:

I'm trying to get the kids to put their heads on their desks and just ignore and don't make eye contact with the child that's been disciplined or, because especially with the Auties, they just, they really, they don't help.

Participant D1 also spoke of how the other learners in the class were impacted by this behaviour and how this disrupted the work of the other learners in the class. He said:

Some people find it really annoying, they will stop work and umm, they'll even yell across the room to tell that person, 'hey you're irritating, please stop this'.

When asked how the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour affected the rest of the learners in the class and the classroom environment, Participant E3 stated:

It kind of stops the other kids because they stop and they look and they often, they would say, you know, look what he's doing or sometimes they would get upset cos he would also fight with them, and very much, umm, snatching their toys, taking what they have, trying to make them upset.

4.3.2.2 Impact on classroom environment

The participants mentioned that the classroom environment, as well as the order of the classroom, were often disrupted by learners who displayed oppositional and defiant

behaviour. The behaviour of these learners interrupted the teaching time and flow of the lessons being taught as the teachers had to stop teaching in order to deal with these learners. This led to a feeling of resentment from the other learners in the class. The teachers spoke of having had to stop the lesson to discipline or remove the learner from the classroom and this also led to feelings of frustration in both the teachers and the learners. This led to the demotivation felt by the teachers as they were unable to give of their best to the other learners in the class while their attention was focused on only one learner in the classroom. This was also associated with the ineffective methods mentioned further in this chapter, as teachers faced frustration when they were unable to maintain a positive and progressive classroom environment.

Participant C2 indicated that it proved challenging to maintain a structured classroom environment when having dealt with an oppositional and defiant learner in the classroom, as the other learners reacted to the teacher's implementation of rules and consequences. She stated that:

... you've got to pick your battles with them and it's very hard, when especially if you're trying to have a structured classroom and you're trying to be fair to everybody, the others often don't understand why these kids get away with things.

Participant E1 indicated a similar feeling in that the learner she referred to tended to disrupt the lesson and prevent the other learners in the class from continuing with their work. She said:

... usually the whole class will be disturbed, like they will stop doing whatever they are doing and some will try to tell him to stop, he's worrying the whole class, they will lecture him sort of.

Participant E2 also indicated that these behaviours influenced the other learners in the class. He said that the oppositional defiant learner did:

Intentionally irritate other learners to stop the lesson" and "physically assault other learners, umm, throw things at learners. It's very disruptive, very difficult.

Participant E2 further stated that:

The other learners stop what they're doing and they look at what this learner is doing, they will complain that this learner is doing this to them. You then have to stop what you're doing to deal with that learner... The effect of that is the other learners start getting up to nonsense... So the effect is very disruptive, the other learners cannot continue with the work, and with our type

of learners, you have to be with them in the classroom working with them. As soon as you stop working, they stop working.

Participant E3 gave a specific example of how one of her learners disturbed her class to the point that he had to be removed. She said that:

it got to a stage where it was just..., he was just affecting everything, we couldn't do anything in the classroom, he undermined everything, he interfered with all the children. So, it really did get to a stage where we had to try something, so ja, then you must remove to another classroom.

4.3.2.3 Impact on the syllabus

One of the participants felt frustrated due to the time spent dealing with the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour rather than spending time on working through the syllabus. This also impacted on the other learners in the class as they were prevented from continuing with the syllabus. This was both demotivating and frustrating for the teachers as they had goals in the syllabus to reach with the learners in their class within specific time frames, and the behaviour of these learners prevented them from reaching these goals. This also linked to the frustration that the teachers felt regarding the inappropriate curriculum that they had to teach, discussed later in this chapter, as the teachers felt pressured to get through the curriculum but felt hindered by the behaviour of these learners.

Participant D1 spoke of the disruption that these behaviours caused in trying to keep to the syllabus once the lesson had been interrupted. He said that:

... that lesson is impacted to the point where that person doesn't benefit much, you spend more time trying to calm them down, rather than return to syllabus.

The participants in this study voiced a concern about how much teaching time they took up in dealing with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. Their interventions often involved isolating the learner which took the teacher out of the classroom and disturbed the work that the rest of the class had been doing. This indicated that teachers were often forced to stop the flow of their lessons, which interrupted their teaching time and delayed the teaching of the syllabus due to the behaviour of these learners. This tended to create a negative classroom environment, a negative teaching and learning environment, and a negative experience of the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom. This appeared to increase reported feelings of frustration and demotivation among the participants in this study. This reported feeling of demotivation, due to these negative experiences, is discussed in the following section.

4.3.3 Demotivation

The theme of becoming demotivated and beginning to doubt one's abilities was also prominent in some of the participants' responses. These feelings were in response to having to deal with oppositional and defiant behaviours on a daily basis. The participants indicated feeling disappointed with themselves and the learner when the learner returned to their previous oppositional and defiant behaviours, despite the teachers' best efforts. They also spoke of the emotional exhaustion that they felt at the end of the day, and the feeling of their efforts with these learners being undermined by other teachers. Some participants discussed the feeling of not succeeding with these learners and the disregard that these learners tended to show the teachers. The participants also mentioned the fluctuations between good and bad days with the learners and the feelings of self-doubt and that they were not coping with the demands that learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour presented. Participant D2 indicated that working with these learners did not lead to feelings of demotivation and that she enjoys her time spent with these learners.

4.3.3.1 Disappointment

The participants spoke of the feeling of disappointment when their efforts appear to have been for nothing, as the oppositional and defiant learner returned to their previous behaviour, after a period of improved behaviour. This made the teachers feel that the pride that they had felt in the learner was no longer justified. This also led to the disappointment felt when the teacher believed that she or he had found a successful strategy in dealing with these learners, only to be let down by the learner and his or her behaviour. The levels of disappointment felt by the teachers could have been mitigated by their understanding or attribution of the causes of the learners' behaviour, as discussed later in this chapter. If the teacher attributed the causes to a genetic source or a home environment, they may have believed that the child had less control over their behaviour and the teacher may be less disappointed in the learner.

Participant C2 stated that:

So, it's two steps forward, three steps back constantly and even in a single day you can have ups and downs so it's quite, it's exhausting because you want to make a difference and you want to feel like you're going places with the child and they will just disappoint you so much that you just feel, you take it, I take it personally.

In addition, Participant E2 spoke of the feeling of having had a successful day with the learner and then the feeling of demotivation when the learner returned to his previous oppositional and defiant behaviour. He said:

When it does, for that one day it's like Yes! I've succeeded, and then the next day it's like Oh!, I'm back to square one.

Participant E2 said that it was demotivating to know that no matter how hard the teachers worked with the children, it was often reversed in the home environment. He said:

Unfortunately, when they go back home, all the work you did here is undone, then you start again the next day.

4.3.3.2 Emotional exhaustion

Some of the participants indicated that dealing with these learners made them feel both emotionally and physically exhausted. This feeling of exhaustion related to the feelings of demotivation and the frustration mentioned above. Teachers who also indicated that they had had very little success in dealing with these learners, tended to speak of these feelings of exhaustion.

Participant C2 spoke of how having dealt with oppositional and defiant learners in the classroom made her feel once the school day was over and she went home. She said:

In terms of how it affects me at home, it's just, it's the emotional exhaustion of having to deal with with that.

When asked how he felt about having dealt with these learners, he voiced a feeling of mental exhaustion. Participant E2 said:

Well, first it's exhausting. It is at the end of the day, mentally you are finished... it is demotivating... It is very very difficult, very frustrating, draining you emotionally and you sometimes dread having to face that learner the next day at school. You actually wish the learner would be at home so you don't have to deal with them.

4.3.3.3 Impact of other teachers

One participant said that it was disheartening to have worked consistently with a learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, only to have had another member of staff reverse those efforts through their actions or words. This had the potential to be demotivating and frustrating for the teachers as the relationship between the teacher and the oppositional and defiant learner was one of the successful strategies and factors, discussed below, that the participants mentioned having used in dealing with these learners.

Participant C2 indicated that it could be demotivating when other staff members failed to understand the process that she as a teacher had gone through in working with the learners with oppositional and defiant behaviour. She said:

... all of which you can do in the classroom, or that you attempt to do in your classroom, can be undone in a heartbeat, when somebody that doesn't understand the child undoes, undoes everything and you've got to start all over again, cause once you've lost their trust and their respect, then you start from the beginning again.

4.3.3.4 Lack of success

The participants indicated that they were often demotivated by the lack of success that they had had with these learners. This led to the participants' views that the initial teacher training that they received had been insufficient, as discussed below, as the teachers found that many of the strategies that they used had been unsuccessful in dealing with the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviours.

Participant D1 indicated that he had dealt with some learners who had made him feel demotivated and unsure of himself. He said:

Initially, I had quite a bit of a problem, every now and again, umm, you would find that one learner who sort of seems to bypass everything you've learnt. Every now and again every person has this one learner, who, ok this doesn't work, this doesn't work, this doesn't work.

Participant E2 spoke about the levels of success that he and his staff had with the oppositional and defiant learners in the school. He indicated that it was be demotivating as success was not a regular occurrence. He said:

We've had, we just haven't had great success with anything because the learners are so much anti everything we're doing... I know that sounds very bad and bleak, it sounds very bleak but whatever you tried hasn't worked with the learners.

4.3.3.5 Disregard for teachers' authority

The participants felt that the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour often disregarded instructions and reprimands given to them by the teachers. This led to the teachers becoming demotivated and frustrated.

Participant E2 indicated having felt demotivated when he gave an instruction to a learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour and that instruction was ignored. He said:

...disobey your instructions, that's mainly the big thing, is just complete disregard for what you have to say.

4.3.3.6 Fluctuation of experiences

One of the participants spoke of the fluctuations between his daily experiences of having dealt with these learners. He indicated that some days were more successful than others and that other days, previous successful strategies no longer appeared to be effective. This was demotivating for the teachers as the teachers may have felt that they had lost control of the learner in their classroom and this impacted on the classroom environment and the other learners in the classroom, as discussed above.

In describing his ability to cope with oppositional and defiant learners in his class, Participant E2 indicated that each day was different and his ability to cope with these learners differed on a daily basis. He said:

On some days, you deal with the learner in a very bad way, you lose all control, you just give up and some days you have better days managing the learner, so you can't necessarily, necessarily say it's completely good or completely bad, each day differs.

4.3.3.7 Self-doubt

Participant E3 voiced her concerns about doubting herself and her abilities as a teacher in having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This showed the importance of the value that the teachers placed in their experience, as discussed later in this chapter. Teachers felt that they were better able to cope with the learners and experienced less self-doubt if they had had previous experience in dealing with these learners. This feeling of self-doubt is also associated with the use of ineffective strategies in having dealt with these learners, as the teacher was frustrated by repeated failed attempts to help the learners improve their behaviour.

Participant E3 indicated a sense of demotivation and self-doubt when she had to deal with oppositional and defiant learners in her class. She said:

Ja, it can make you feel like you don't know what you doing and you question yourself, you know, what should I be doing? This is not working, why is it not working? You do, you doubt yourself and you question yourself.

4.3.3.8 Inability to cope

Participant E3 spoke of her feelings of not coping with the behaviour of these learners, especially if the behaviours had continued for an extended period of time. This led to feelings of demotivation as strategies that the teacher had used had proved to be unsuccessful and the teacher may not have known what strategy to try next.

Participant E3 described her ability to cope with the behaviours of these learners in her classroom. She said:

It depends on how many days it's gone on for, you know you start off really well but if it's all day everyday, by Friday you feel like you're not coping.

4.3.3.9 A motivated participant

Participant D2 indicated that she did not feel demotivated when having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This related to the value that teachers placed on their experience in having dealt with these learners, in particular for this participant who emphasised the importance of her years of experience in her classroom and for her mentorship of other teachers.

Participant D2 spoke of her feelings of having dealt with these learners and she was more positive than the other participants. She said:

To tell you the truth, you know, I, I'm, I don't know what to say, I don't really have a problem with these children.

The data obtained from the majority of participants showed a level of demotivation in having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The teachers felt that despite all of their best efforts in the classroom, it was often the case that the learners' behaviour continued as before. The teachers voiced their concerns regarding their feelings of self-doubt and the lack of success that some of them had experienced in dealing with these learners. This showed that dealing with learners that displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour was seen by the majority of participants as a negative experience. This negative experience influenced both their perceptions of themselves as teachers and their ability to cope with the learners in their class. The ineffective methods, that increase the teachers' frustration and demotivation, are discussed below.

4.4 Ineffective methods of dealing with oppositional defiant behaviour

The participants indicated that through trial and error, and based on the reactions of the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, there were some strategies that proved ineffective when they dealt with these learners. The participants mentioned feeling that attending to the learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour before they had calmed down was ineffective. They also mentioned that punishing these learners and giving vague reasons for being asked to do an activity proved unsuccessful in having dealt with these learners. Giving the learners work to do after they had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour and becoming emotional or shouting at the learners were also said to be ineffective methods of having dealt with these learners. Some participants indicated that the removal of the child from the classroom had proven unsuccessful, while other participants indicated that this was a successful strategy used to help the learner calm down. Participant E2 indicated that he had had no success with any of the strategies that he had used.

4.4.1 Attending to the learner too soon

Participant C1 mentioned that she had found it counterproductive to begin dealing with the learner who had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour before the learner had calmed themselves down. This linked to the value that teachers placed in their experience as it became their decision, based on previous experience, when it was most appropriate to intervene.

Participant C1 indicated that sometimes having intervened in the early stages after the oppositional and defiant behaviour had occurred, had the potential to make the situation worse. She said:

... because if you intervene, you know, you will actually, the child get more angry, he doesn't listen, he screams, he shouts, you actually lose control yourself.

4.4.2 Punishment

The participants indicated that they had found the punishment of these learners to be unsuccessful. This was due to the fact that the punishments either gave the learner the attention that he had been craving, or it singled the child out and did not allow for communication or for a relationship between the teacher and the learners. This emphasised

the experience of the teachers in knowing when punishment was an inappropriate strategy and knowing that punishing a learner may have actually served as a reward for the learner, in terms of the attention that the learners was seeking.

Participant C1 mentioned some other strategies that she had found to be ineffective with these learners. She said:

... my experience is sort of to punish a child or to single him out or to put him in a corner now afterwards, you know, or take away some of his privileges to a certain extent, it depends on what the privileges are you know, you actually don't get anywhere with the children.

Participant E3 said that punishments tended to be ineffective as they provided the learner with the attention that he had sought:

Umm, punishments, anything that you had to focus all the attention on him, that didn't work because it's almost as if you were giving him what he wanted and even ignoring him didn't work, honestly, I don't think anything worked. But basically, it's the things that have a direct attention focused on him and then the more you raised your voice a little bit.

4.4.3 Vague or unmotivated instructions

Participant D2 indicated that having instructed learners to do an activity without having informed them of the reason for completing that activity often led to oppositional and defiant behaviour from the learner. This was the opposite of the successful strategy of giving reasons for instructions, discussed later in this chapter. This strategy arose from the teacher's experience with these learners and this participant in particular placed much emphasis on her years of teaching experience.

Participant D2 stated that she found that being vague when she gave these learners instructions and the reasons for obeying these instructions led to oppositional and defiant behaviour. She said:

... if you just say, do this here, then they feel, they don't know why they doing it and that's when I feel they want to oppose you.

4.4.4 Giving additional work

The participants spoke of how having given a learner, who had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, classwork to complete had the potential to trigger further oppositional and defiant behaviour. This proved to be an unsuccessful strategy as the learners sometimes

opposed the work because they found it too difficult. This could be resolved by a successful strategy discussed later in this chapter, in which the learners were taken back to work that they had previously completed successfully. This led to frustration for the teachers as they were required to teach the curriculum and reach curriculum goals, and this refusal to do work by the learners had the potential to prevent the teacher from reaching these goals.

Participant D1 said that having given the learner any type of work increased the oppositional and defiant behaviour from the learner:

What doesn't work is just giving them work, if you give them work and they're defying you, the first round, even if it's a task different, the fact that it's still work, whether they're in mainstream or in special needs, ok this is work, I don't wanna do it.

Participant D3 spoke specifically about having asked learners to complete written tasks:

... it's writing.... It's writing. It's, they can't, I've tried and I've tried and they can't and you know, you have noticed that they hate the moment you give him a pen or a crayon and the paper... it's where the trouble starts in this class.

4.4.5 Becoming emotional

The participants said that they had found that having become emotional themselves and having raised their voices when having dealt with these learners was an unsuccessful strategy. This proved to be the opposite of the successful strategy of changing the tone of the teachers' voices, discussed later in this chapter. They said that when they had shouted at the learners who had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, the learners' behaviour escalated and it made it more difficult to contain the behaviour of these learners. This proved to be frustrating for the teachers, as indicated previously in this chapter, as they had to control their own emotions and reactions while they tried to limit the distraction for the rest of the class and while they tried to deal with the oppositional and defiant behaviour of the learner. This is where the value placed in experience over the teachers' training was evident. The teachers that had experience with these learners, through trial and error, were more aware of when it was appropriate to raise their voices and better able to contain their own emotions in response to these behaviours.

Participant C2 indicated that she learnt through experience that some of the methods she had used were not suitable for learners who displayed these behaviours. She said:

Hmm, I learnt the hard way that you don't yell and shout and scream and jump up and down because that just fuels the fire.

Participant E3 said that when she got angry with the learners, she had had had little success with the learners:

Getting angry cos they pick up on the fact that they've now angered you and they get some sort of sense of accomplishment or something...

When asked specifically about which methods the participants had found to be unsuccessful with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, they had the following to say:

Participant C1:

Oh, become emotional yourself, screaming and shouting, shouting at the child, threaten them, umm, say 'I'm going to inform your parents', uh, ja.

Participant C2:

Shouting, yelling, screaming, labelling, name calling, threatening, empty threats, Ja empty threats.

Participant C3:

Shouting and screaming, umm, umm, engaging too much with the the the child who is, umm, being defiant.

4.4.6 Removal from class

Participant E1 found it counterproductive to remove the learner from the classroom. She indicated that doing this made the situation worse and the learner then became more oppositional and defiant in his behaviour. This related to the possible causes of these behaviours, as discussed later in this chapter, as a learner who was accustomed to getting everything that he wanted, or getting his own way in his home environment, had the potential to become oppositional and defiant when he was denied his own way or what he wanted at school. This was also associated with the teachers' experience of the learner who disturbed the class and teaching time, as the teacher had to remove herself from the class in order to deal with the learner who refused to leave the classroom or the learner had to be escorted to another teacher's classroom or the principal's office.

Participant E1 discussed how she had found the removal of the learner from the classroom to be an unsuccessful strategy in having dealt with the learner. She said:

... sometimes chasing him out of the classroom, he refuses... and tells me that he has come to learn and all that stuff, he has rights, he's going to fetch his parents.

4.4.7 No successful strategy

Participant E2 indicated that he felt that he had had no success with the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This increased the feeling of demotivation felt by the teachers, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The teachers who faced a sense of failure with these learners on a daily basis may have begun to feel that they could not cope with these learners and they may have begun to question their own abilities as teachers.

Participant E2 said that he had met with no success in dealing with these learners, despite having tried many strategies and having contacted the relevant stakeholders. He said:

Because of the extreme cases we've had, everything we've done has proven to be unsuccessful, we've spoken to the learner calmly, the learner couldn't be bothered, we've raised our voices, couldn't be bothered, phone the parents, had a parent meeting with the learner, learner would not respond to anything.

The participants discussed the strategies that they had found to be unsuccessful in having dealt with these learners. In particular, the participants in this study appeared to agree that having become angry and having lost control of their emotions, just as their learners did, was one of the most ineffective methods of having dealt with oppositional and defiant behaviours in the classroom. Participant E2, in particular, mentioned that he had not had any success in having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The level at which the teachers believed that they were not achieving success with these learners often led to frustration and demotivation from the teachers. This impacted on their opinion of their own teaching ability and their ability to give of their best to the rest of the class. Teachers who felt that they were not succeeding in teaching and helping learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour often experienced their time in the classroom as a negative experience. A presentation of the methods that teachers had found to be effective in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners is offered below.

4.5 Effective methods of dealing with oppositional defiant behaviour

Some of the participants felt that they had found success in having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom. Other participants felt that success was rare and in many cases, they felt that they had to date not found a successful

approach to having dealt with these learners in their classes. The participants mentioned the use of positive reinforcement and giving the learners the time and space to calm down after they had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. Participant D1 indicated that returning to a stage in the work where the learner had achieved success had proved successful in having reduced the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour. Participant D2 said that being specific and giving reasons for instructions had proved successful with her learners. The participants also indicated that negotiating with the learners and making the punishments individualised towards specific learners had been effective strategies in having dealt with the oppositional and defiant learners in the classroom. They also said that the learners responded well to the use of consequences, the removal of privileges, and the change of the tone of the teachers' voices. The participants also found that being focused on specific behaviours, rather than having addressed all of the learners' behaviours, and the building of a relationship with the learners' who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour were successful in having dealt with these learners and behaviours in the classroom.

4.5.1 Positive reinforcement

The participants spoke of having provided learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour with incentives to aim for, and they then positively reinforced the learners' good behaviour. This linked to the causes that the teachers mentioned for these behaviours. If the teacher believed that genetics was the primary cause of the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour then positive reinforcement was not seen as an effective strategy as the learner would not have been able to control their behaviour. If the teacher believed that the cause of these behaviours was attributed to peer pressure or their home environment, then more hope was placed on using positive reinforcement as a strategy for having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The use of positive reinforcement as a successful strategy indicated the difference between the previous mention of the use of punishment and shouting at the learners as an unsuccessful strategy, as many of the teachers found that the identification of positive behaviours was more beneficial than a focus on the learners' negative behaviours.

Participant C1 stressed the importance of positive reinforcement. She said:

You know, I just find in the past you know, even by just chatting to a child calmly afterwards, I get more and that is in fact my goal than punishment or single him out or let him sit on the corridor, by just chatting to him, and then

next time when I can see he is trying and he reached his goal then do a lot of positive reinforcement.

When asked specifically about what methods the participants had found to be successful, they had the following to report regarding positive reinforcement:

Participant C1:

Umm, just being supportive... just to be as possible, the slightest thing that you see they are trying is to encourage them to keep on keep on trying and to constantly refer to that.

Participant D2:

The rewards.... we make announcements in assembly, in our phase assembly, we give them, before we used to have little trophies that whoever does something exceptionally outstanding, and they are brought out in front and praised, and that helps a bit.

4.5.2 Allowing the learner to calm down

The participants indicated that if they allowed the learner the time and space to calm down, and having allowed themselves as teachers to calm down, was a successful strategy in dealing with the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This showed the importance of the value that the participants placed in their experience with these learners, as discussed later in this chapter. Teachers who had experience with these learners were better able to remain calm, even when the situation itself had not yet de-escalated. They were also better able to identify when the learner had calmed down enough to begin speaking to that learner.

Participant C2 spoke about having allowed the learner to calm themselves down before she engaged with them. She said:

... in the space where they cannot reason, because they are so angry about something so, you know, feel like everything is so terribly unfair, you can't reason with them, you've just got to actually give space to cool off before you do anything.

Participant C3 indicated that she only addressed the situation and behaviour when she and the learner were clam and only if she deemed it necessary. She said:

try and diffuse the situation by being calm and only speaking, or only addressing it if it's completely necessary.

Participant C3 also indicated the following:

I find I have to be calm ... sometimes I cannot engage straight away, I need to just let everybody settle down, calm down and discuss the situation, just the children involved or the child and me and not having an audience.

4.5.3 Revert to previous successes

Participant D1 indicated that having returned to a section of work that the learners had previously completed successfully helped to calm the oppositional and defiant learner down and helped to increase the self-confidence of these learners. This was associated with both the teachers' initial training and their use of their own experience in the classroom. The teachers would have been trained in using the learners' previous successes during their initial teacher training, however this would not have been in the context of having dealt with a learner who had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The teachers made use of their previous experiences in having dealt with these learners to determine what section of the work to return to or to determine where in the syllabus the learners had previously achieved success. This may have frustrated the teachers as the return to previous work may have impacted on the curriculum goals that the teacher had set for the learner.

Participant D1 spoke of having gone back to previous knowledge and easier tasks when the learners in his class displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour as a result of having struggled with the level of work. He said:

I think there's a tendency for learners to sort of defy or oppose the instruction they're given if they feel they're gonna have difficulty with it, so we tend to slow it down, go back to stages or, at school our general policy, if a learner cannot do something and they've achieved some success with an activity prior.

Participant D1 also said:

I think getting them to be calm, firstly, if they're more relaxed then they're more open to a different sort of suggestion... when they get back to class, you can't go back to the same lesson, so you go backwards, look at what they could do, start from there and very slowly build up.

4.5.4 Give reasons for instructions

Participant D2 said that she found that making the reason behind doing an action or following an instruction clear to the learners led to less oppositional and defiant behaviour from the learner. She believed that if the learners understood why they were being asked to complete an activity, they would have had less reason to oppose that instruction or the teacher herself. This proved to be the opposite of the unsuccessful strategy of giving vague instructions,

discussed earlier in this chapter. This linked to another successful strategy, as discussed below, of having formed a relationship with the learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. A teacher who showed respect towards the learner by having taken the time to explain the reasoning behind instructions, tended to have a mutually respectful relationship with the learner. This proved to be a successful factor in having dealt with these learners in the classroom.

Participant D2 stated that she believed that if learners were given a reason for why they must complete an instruction that they became less oppositional and defiant. She said:

The strategy I use generally is make it very uh, give them a reason, I always say give them a reason why you asking them to do that, once they sort of kinda understand why they doing it, then it's more acceptable to them I feel.

4.5.5 Negotiation

Participant D3 indicated that negotiating with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour had proven to be a successful strategy in her classroom. This involved the teacher's previous experience in finding the learners' currency or the incentives that the learner was willing to accept in return for a change in their own behaviour. This also related to the teachers' views on the causes of the learner's oppositional and defiant behaviour. If the teacher believed that the learner's behaviour was due to genetics or a disorder, negotiation would have had little success in changing the learner's behaviour. If the teacher believed that the learner was in control of their own behaviour, the use of negotiation may have proved to be a successful strategy in having dealt with these learners as the learner may have considered the benefits of the negotiation process.

Participant D3 mentioned the use of negotiation and bargaining. She said:

Firstly, I have to calm myself, then I have to give a child a smile then I have to to to promise him something, that if you give me this, I will give you this.

4.5.6 Individualised punishments

The participants said that in order for the use of punishment to be successful with these learners, the punishment needed to be tailored to the individual learner, as a more general punishment that applied to all learners may not have been suitable or effective with the learner who had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The oppositional and defiant learner may have used a time out period, which may have been successful with other learners,

as an opportunity to distract other learners in the class. This stressed the importance of the value that the participants placed in their practical experiences with these learners as this enabled them to identify the most effective and appropriate punishments for the learners, rather than having punished the learner in a way that would have further disrupted the class and teaching time and potentially given the learner the attention that he had been seeking.

Participant E2 spoke of the need to make punishments individualised for each learner. He said:

Once you get to know the learner, you then start thinking, ok how, what is best for the learner, because sometimes if you if you punish a learner and that punishment is actually enjoyment for the learner. So, you've gotta make it very individualised, using one form of punishment will not work for another type of learner.

4.5.7 Consequences

Participant E3 indicated that having provided the learner that displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour with a consequence for their behaviour helped to decrease that behaviour. This may have helped to prevent the oppositional and defiant behaviour before it began, if the learner was aware of the consequence of beginning the behaviour or continuing the behaviour. This once again was related to the teachers' views on the causes of these behaviours as if the teacher believed that the learner was able to control their own behaviour, the use of consequences as a strategy may have proved to be successful and the learner may have chosen to comply with the teachers' instructions.

Participant E3 spoke of the need for consequences. She said:

You speak to them, tell them to stop doing that and then give a consequence, so if you carry on, you're going to go and sit in the time out, or whatever it is.

4.5.8 Removal of privileges

The participants spoke of knowing what the learners, who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, valued and having removed these privileges or objects when the learners displayed these behaviours. This was associated with the teachers views on the causes of these behaviours as behaviours caused by genetic factors or by a disorder would not be dealt with successfully by having removed privileges as the learners would not be in control of their own behaviours. This also linked to the experience of the teachers in having known

which privileges to remove in order to help the learner change their behaviour and to minimise the disruption to the other learners and to teaching time.

Participant E1 (pointed at a DVD playing in the background) said that she found the removal of certain privileges to have been successful:

when I tell him that he's not going to be allowed to use it then he'll stop whatever he's doing and listen.

Participant E2 indicated the same as the participant above:

... a phone call to the parents and also just removing some of the rewards like not letting a learner play with her friends at break time, those have had minimal successes.

4.5.9 Changing the intonation of the teachers' voice

Participant E3 spoke of her previous success with one of her learners by having lowered the tone and volume of her voice rather than having raised her voice and shouted at the learner. She indicated that by having done this the learner was caught by surprise as he did not get the attention that he had been looking for and he then stopped behaving in an oppositional and defiant manner. This showed the difference between the unsuccessful strategy of having raised their voices, that the participants mentioned earlier in this chapter, as this participant found it more beneficial to have done the opposite with her voice. This strategy was formed due to the participant's own experience in the classroom, and through trial and error, rather than due to her initial teacher training, which as indicated later in this chapter, did not focus on the specific behaviours of these learners and how to deal with oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom.

Participant E3 said that she had found that the lowering of her voice and changing her tone of voice had been successful with one of her learners:

... working with him one on one, he definitely did more but then also if you kept your voice, if you went the opposite and just went really quiet and you spoke very quietly, very monotone, so there was no emotion no nothing, that worked cos he wasn't getting what he wanted.

4.5.10 Focus on specific behaviours

Participant C1 indicated that she had found that a focus on the learners' specific behaviours, and having narrowed her focus to the behaviours that she was capable of addressing, had

proved successful in having dealt with these learners. This allowed for an increased opportunity for positive reinforcement, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, as the learner was more focused on what they could have achieved in improving their behaviour and they could have set themselves specific goals in improving their behaviour, rather than having tried to change all of their behaviours simultaneously. This also helped the teacher to build a relationship with the learner, as discussed below, which was another successful strategy mentioned by the participants.

Participant C1 spoke of having focused on what the learner was doing right and having focused on one specific behaviour, rather than the entire pattern of behaviour. She said:

... never step in and show emotion like anger while the child is also angry... there are so many other things that he battles with, decide which of those behaviour patterns are the more serious ones, and address that after the, if I can call it, meltdown, uh, and sometimes be a little more lenient on the child, instead of you know, to reprimand him for every single thing, uh, and just be as positive as possible... and you must actually have a relationship with the child where you can always predict, now you are going too far so you have to pull back, not to provoke or to, umm, almost light a fire.

4.5.11 Building a relationship with the learner

Participant C2 believed that a relationship built on mutual respect between the teacher and the learner proved to be successful in helping learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. Having built this relationship with the learners took time and effort from both the learners and the teachers and it required a commitment from both parties to respect each other and to try their best to work together. A teacher who was able to deal constructively with the frustration and demotivation, as indicated earlier in this chapter, that she felt when having dealt with these learners was better able to form this genuine relationship with the learners. This could have led to a more successful and enjoyable teaching environment for the teacher, the oppositional and defiant learners and the other learners in the rest of the class.

Participant C2 indicated that building a relationship with the learner helped to reduce these behaviours by the learner:

Appealing to them and build a relationship with them when they're in a good place... to show them mutual respect, they've got to feel like like you respect them in spite of their behaviour and then that kind of goes when you're disciplining them, your disappointment, they do feel your disappointment when, when they've let you down.

The participants in this study found mixed success in having dealt with oppositional and defiant learners. While some of the participants indicated that they had had little to no success in having dealt with these learners, some participants were able to provide strategies that they had had some success with in the past. Many of the participants maintained that having kept calm themselves increased the chance of success with these learners. This applied to both the relationships that they had built with the learners, and the way that they dealt with the learners after the learner had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. While the participants indicated high levels of frustration and demotivation in their dealings with these learners on a daily basis, the participants did indicate that there were strategies that were effective and successful in the classroom. This provided a sense of positivity and hope for teachers who may have been struggling with a learner who had displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classroom. The participants indicated that these successful strategies may have been successful with a learner the one day and then unsuccessful the next day, as dealing with these learners could have been unpredictable and each day had the potential to bring new challenges. They also indicated that each child who displayed this behaviour was unique and that a strategy that proved successful for a learner may not have been successful with another learner. This is where the value of the teachers' experiences became important as the teachers found that they often had to alter their strategies based on the reactions of the learners involved. The views expressed by the teachers regarding the causes of the oppositional and defiant behaviour seen in their classrooms is presented below. These views influenced how the teachers reacted to the learners and which strategies they made use of when dealing with these learners.

4.6 Teachers' views on the causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour

The participants acknowledged that the oppositional and defiant behaviour that they had experienced in the classroom could have stemmed from multiple causes. They all indicated that they believed the strongest cause of this behaviour was the home environment and the functionality of the family system. The participants discussed the structure of the family and the early ineffective handling of the learner, in terms of discipline, as well as the learner having been spoilt at home as possible causes of the oppositional and defiant behaviour that they had seen in the classroom. They also mentioned the fact that both parents often worked and the influence of the media on these learners as alternative causes of these behaviours. The

participants also spoke of the cause having been a more biological one in that the learners may have had a disorder that added to their frustration in the school environment. Some of the participants felt that it could not be narrowed down to just one cause and they indicated that they felt that there was a combination of factors that caused the learners to display oppositional and defiant behaviour.

4.6.1 Family structure

The participants indicated that they believed one of the main causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour to be the structure of the family environment in which the child was brought up and lived. They said that the learners' home life had had an influence on how the learner behaved in the classroom environment, either due to events in the home such as divorce or domestic violence, or due to absent parents or single parent households. Many of the behaviours displayed by these learners in the classroom appeared to be an imitation of what they were exposed to in their homes or an imitation of the conflict management strategy that they were exposed to in their home environment. This increased the frustration and demotivation that the teachers indicated feeling, as discussed above, as the work that they had done with the learner during school was often reversed or undone once the child went back to their home environment and the teachers felt that they had to start again with the learners.

The participants had the following to say when asked what they believed to be the cause of the oppositional and defiant behaviour that they experienced in their classrooms:

Participant C1:

it might be the family setup.

Participant C2:

I think home life, environment is a, is the biggest to be perfectly honest.

Participant E1:

I think it's the background home.

Participant E2:

Dysfunctional home environments, broken families, umm single parents, absent fathers, divorces... within the family system.

4.6.2 Ineffective early handling

The participants also indicated that the manner in which the child was treated at home, whether it had been a lack of attention or the having given the learner everything that he or she asked for, could impact on the behaviour of the learner. This could have led to increased oppositional and defiant behaviour as the learner may have sought attention by having been oppositional or may have expected to get his own way in the classroom as he did in his home environment. This suggested cause of these behaviours indicated that the teachers believed that the learner was in control of his or her behaviours. In both cases, the previously mentioned successful strategy of having built a relationship with the learner, may have proved beneficial if it was based on mutual trust and respect from both the teacher and the learner.

When asked for the possible causes of these behaviours, the participants had the following to say:

Participant C2:

but I definitely think that ... ineffective handling from an early age just lets it, the problem escalate.

Participant D2:

Initially, it comes from home, umm, because the children, some of these children are very spoilt at home... so when he comes to school he expects to behave and accept the same kind of treatment. So, the moment you give him something to do, he doesn't want to do it because he doesn't do it at home.

4.6.3 Working parents

Participant C1 believed that the fact that both parents were working played a role in having increased the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour. This led to the learner having received less attention from their parents and possibly having spent more time alone in the home. The teachers may have had to fill the role of the parents while the learner was at school, and given the learners the attention that they were not receiving in their home environments. This may have led to the frustration felt by the teachers, as indicated above, as the teachers felt that they had to give more attention the learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, at the expense of the other learners in the class.

Participant C1 said that parents who both work may have led to the learner acting out or having displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour:

because I think both parents are working so there are lots of family dynamics at home, less attention for children, you know, the children are frustrated...

4.6.4 A combination of factors

Some of the participants indicated that they could not narrow the cause of these behaviours to just one cause and they said that they believed that a number of factors were responsible for the display of these behaviours. They mentioned peer pressure, school transport, the difficulty of the curriculum and chemical or biological factors, as possible causes that interacted and may have led to the learners' display of oppositional and defiant behaviour. This attribution of the causes of these behaviours to multiple factors, may have determined the extent to which the teachers believed that the learners were in control of their own behaviour. This could have influenced the teachers' level of frustration and demotivation as the teachers may have felt that there was little that they could have done to help these learners if the behaviour was influenced largely by biological factors.

Participant D1 indicated that multiple factors may have influenced the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour:

I don't think you can identify one key cause because umm, we're not in these learners' homes, I don't know how they, I know that some are travelling on the bus, so we don't know if it's peer pressure, or maybe home problems... maybe the fact that they are having problems, though we're a skilled based curriculum, everyone's not going to meet with success.

Participant E3 discussed both chemical and environmental factors in having caused these behaviours:

I don't know... I think it's kinds of like an ADHD thing, so it's sometimes like a chemical, but I do think with general behavioural problems as well... I think it's a bit of everything, like that whole nature and nurture but I mean I think sometimes it's just in their nature but also sometimes, depending on the home environment, if they coming like from a violent home environment or if they left on their own all the time, or running around with kids in their neighbourhood that are bad influences, that I think plays a part, but then also at school, if you get a child that that sort of pulled into a group and taught that stuff at school... they need strong boundaries, if they come from a home with strong boundaries then it's, they know what's right and wrong, but then again if they born with it, it's a chemical thing, it wouldn't matter.

4.6.5 Disorders

The participants indicated that a learner who had been diagnosed with a disorder such as ADHD or a specific learning disorder, may have displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour due to the frustration presented by their disorder. This linked to the strategy, indicated as a successful strategy earlier in this chapter, of having returned to work that the learner had previously been successful at, as a learner who struggled with work in general, due to their disorder, may have opposed or defied a teacher who attempted to continue with work at a level that the learners found too difficult or overwhelming. This was also related to the teachers' perception of their initial teacher training, as many of the teachers indicated that they had not been taught about the specific disorders, and they had not been taught how to deal with these disorders or the behaviours associated with them. This is why the teachers' felt that their experiences in the classroom were valuable in knowing how to work with the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour and those that presented with a disorder and these behaviours.

Participant C1 discussed the frustration that the learners may have felt if they had a disorder that influenced their learning, and that this may have led to oppositional and defiant behaviours:

I would say it might be generics... at our school there might be some cases of children with, with a specific learning disability, and so they are frustrated so that adds, so say for instance, a communication problem, that add to their aggressive behaviour

Participant C2 indicated that a disorder may have escalated the learners behaviour:

I think things like ADD just make it worse

4.6.6 Influence of the media

Participant C3 indicated that the media, particularly television, influenced the behaviour of the learners as the learners mimicked what they saw on television, as well as the conflict resolution strategies used by the television characters.

Participant C3 said that the imitation of television programmes influenced the learners' behaviour:

I think it is home life, I think they, they just don't know the boundaries and of course what they watch on TV and the way situations are resolved on TV and

books and magazines and I suppose the way they pick up from others and we all have different ways of, of umm, sifting things out.

The participants largely believed that these oppositional and defiant behaviours stemmed from the home environment and the situations in which these learners lived on a daily basis. They believed that the home environment of the learner, either due to working parents, ineffective handling at an early age, or the structure of the family may have led to an increase in oppositional and defiant behaviour. Some participants believed that the content of the television programmes that the learners were viewing and the diagnosed disorders that may have been hindering their progress at school, also played a role in the increased occurrence of oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms. The participants were also of the view that it was difficult to narrow the causes down to one factor, as many factors influenced these learners on a daily basis and a genetic or chemical cause for the oppositional and defiant behaviour may have been further exacerbated by a challenging home environment or peer pressure within the school. The teachers' understanding of the causes of these behaviours influenced their experiences in the classroom and the amount of responsibility that they placed on the learner themselves. The teachers who viewed the cause as a biological one, were possibly more tolerant of the learners' behaviours as the learner was not in control of their own behaviour. Teachers who believed that the causes were more situational, particularly from the home environment, may have experienced more frustration and demotivation as they believed that the learners were better able to control their own behaviour, but that they chose not to behave in a more compliant and less oppositional manner. This could have influenced the classroom environment and the interactions between the teachers and all of the learners in the classroom, as the teacher may have spent energy and time in having dealt with the learner who was deliberately misbehaving or had defied the teacher. The training that the teachers received influenced how confident they felt in using various strategies in dealing with these learners, their views on the adequacy and relevance of their training is presented below.

4.7 Teachers' views on the adequacy and relevance of their training

4.7.1 Effectiveness of initial teacher training

The participants were asked what sort of training they had received in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour during their initial teacher training. This training did not include any training that they further received in the field of special education after they had received their initial teaching qualification. Some of the participants completed additional qualifications in order to inform themselves about behavioural problems such as oppositional and defiant behaviour. Some of the participants said that they felt that their initial teacher training had been inadequate and they had felt the need to further their training by completing additional qualifications. The majority of the participants, some of whom had been trained more recently and some who had qualified in the past, indicated that regardless of when they had received their training, it still had proved inadequate. Participant E1 felt that her training had been adequate. The participants had the following to report:

4.7.1.1 Inadequate initial teacher training

The majority of the participants said that the training that they had received during their initial teacher training course had not equipped them to deal with learners in their classroom who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The training they had received had focused on the mainstream school setting, with no theoretical or practical content related to the behavioural or emotional challenges faced by learners in the special needs educational context. This was associated with the feeling of demotivation and frustration experienced by the teachers, as indicated earlier in this chapter. The teachers, both those who had been teaching for a number of years and those who had qualified more recently, felt that their initial training had left them feeling unprepared for the learners that they were expected to teach and this led them to use trial and error as a strategy with these learners and to make use of the experiences of the teachers around them, in order to cope with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms.

Participant C2, when asked what training she had initially received, said:

Absolutely nothing.

Participant D2 had the same sentiments:

We never had that training.

4.7.1.2 Need for specialised training by experienced people

Some of the participants were sufficiently disappointed in their initial teacher training, that they felt the need to further their education and training in areas relevant to the types of learners that they were facing in their classroom daily. Some participants also attended content specific courses related to the curriculum and specific disorders while having been employed by the special needs schools that they were teaching in. This supported the need that the teachers felt to find successful strategies in having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour and to find alternative resources to assist them in their daily classroom experience. They placed a high value on their own practical experiences with these learners and on having learnt from the experiences of other teachers and experts in the field.

Participant E2 indicated that he had felt the need to complete a further qualification in order to understand and work with the oppositional and defiant learners in his class, as his initial training had not dealt with this issue:

No... that is why I did the advanced certificate in education, specialising in behaviour problems... to say we've been trained specifically with opposition dysfunction learners, no.

Participant C1 indicated that she also felt the need to acquire further training and education, she listed her qualifications as:

I have a home economics degree, a Higher Education Diploma and a Diploma in Specialized Educational Needs.

Participant D2 said that when she had entered the special school that she teaches at, she attended a course to further her skills in dealing with these particular learners as her existing skills base had proven insufficient:

When I entered the school, we went on a course, I was just fortunate enough that there were offered a course and I did a very intense course on Inclusive Education.

Participant D3 also listed her qualifications and the additional qualification that she had completed in order to help learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour:

I've got a Junior Primary teacher's diploma... now I've got the HDE, I've got the B Ed Honours Inclusive Education.

Participant E1 had similar additional qualifications:

I've got umm, teaching diploma... I also hold a two postgrads degrees that is, and Honours in Psychology and Honours in Education, B Ed.

Participant E2 indicated that he had furthered his education, due to the need to understand the learners in his class. His qualifications were as follows:

I've got uh, a diploma in Education, uh I've got Advanced Certificate in Education... specialising in behavioural problems... and I've got an Honours degree in Educational Management.

Participant E3 also mentioned her qualifications and further studies that she had completed and was studying at the time:

I have my Psychology Honours and I have a PGCE, I have, I don't know, it's a year, it's an art therapy and then a computers ICDL... I am currently studying AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication).

4.7.1.3 Recent versus earlier training

The participants provided varied responses as to how long they had been teaching and therefore how long ago they had received their initial teacher training. The teachers who had qualified a number of years ago, and those teachers that had qualified more recently, both indicated that the initial training that they had received had been inadequate for the learners that they had in their classrooms. The teachers who had been teaching for longer felt that their experience was valuable in dealing with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour and they were often willing to pass their experience on to younger or more recently qualified teachers. Both the recently qualified and longer serving teachers indicated that they experienced frustration and demotivation when having dealt with these learners.

Participant C1 (teaching for 32 years) indicated that she had not received any training on oppositional and defiant behaviour:

To be honest, 32 years back, I did not receive one single stitch of any sort... in my studies there was no provision made for any sort of behavioural, umm, difficulties or umm, defiant behaviour, none of that.

Participant C3 (teaching for 26 years) indicated that there had not been a focus on oppositional and defiant behaviour in her initial teacher training:

It's so long ago, I can't remember. I do remember finding sort of child psychology quite interesting, so there must have been something about it. Ja, but not much in the training.

Participant D1 (teaching for four years) said that there was a limited focus on special needs education in his initial teacher training and that strategies for dealing with these behaviours were not part of the training:

Ok as a concept, uh, explicitly it was not brought up, as far as special needs go, umm, they're sort of kept giving us theory about full service schools and encouraging us to adapt, but uh, in terms, for example, if they brought up other conditions such as dyslexia, they didn't say ok, they will tell us these are signs and symptoms but they didn't say, if you have a learner like this in your classroom and you're in a full service school, these are some of the strategies you need to use... It's less practical training with special needs because, there just didn't seem to be too much of a focus for it in the college at the time... in terms of training, there was very little for special needs.

4.7.1.4 Adequate training

Participant E1 said that she felt that she had been adequately trained during her initial teacher training as she had been trained in dealing with high school learners and the behaviours that they presented with. This participant completed two further qualifications after her initial teacher training to better help the learners in her special needs class.

Participant E1 indicated that she had found her training to be sufficient in dealing with these learners in her classroom:

Fortunately, I did umm Secondary, Secondary teaching diploma, so there is that section that talks about behaviour, you know teenagers and development, it runs through all the ages that, from this age to that age. It's umm, they display that kind of particular behaviour and so on.

In general, the majority of the participants found that their initial teacher training did not prepare them for the learners that they were expected to teach. This was the case for oppositional and defiant learners and some of the participants felt the need to further their studies in order to help these learners and to personally cope better with the learners in their classrooms. Both more recently qualified teachers and long serving teachers felt that their initial training had been inadequate. With the policy of inclusive education having been rolled out in South African schools, this lack of training in the characteristics and experiences of learners with special needs could have impacted both mainstream teachers and special needs teachers. The more recently qualified teachers may have felt unprepared for the special needs learners that were placed in their mainstream classrooms, and teachers that entered special needs schools for the first time may have become demotivated and frustrated that the theory they were taught did not work on a practical level in the classroom. The teachers compared

the value of the training they had received to the value that they placed in actual classroom experience, this is presented below.

4.7.2 Value of experience

Many of the participants felt that their years of experience and their practical experiences in the classroom served them better than any training they had received. They mentioned the use of a trial and error approach in order to better assist the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms. Some participants indicated that they believed that teachers could not be trained to deal with these behaviours as it was through experiential learning that they had worked out how to deal with these learners. The participants also felt that their dealing with these learners was based on their own intuition and the use of trial and error or experimentation in the methods they used in the classroom. The participants suggested that there was no substitute for experience but that they would appreciate more guidance and training in the identification and characteristics of these learners. This training was only received, in some cases, in their additional qualifications but not in their initial teacher training.

4.7.2.1 Theoretical training is ineffective

Some of the participants indicated that they felt that the most effective way of having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour was based on their previous experiences in the classroom rather than any training that they may have or could have received. They said that each learner was unique and that training teachers would not equip them for the wide range and variety of experiences and behaviours that they had faced in the classroom. They felt that having used their own intuition and a process of trial and error was more effective than any training that could have been provided. This led to the suggestion, discussed later in this chapter, of having created a database in which teachers could learn from the experiences of other teachers in terms of how they dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This process of trial and error, without the foundation of structured training, could have led to teachers becoming frustrated and demotivated as they tried a variety of strategies, some of which were unsuccessful, and they could have felt that they were not coping with these learners in their classroom.

Participant C2 said that she did not believe that a teacher could be trained to deal with these learners as each learner was an individual with unique behaviours:

I don't think you can be trained to, to deal with these learners. I don't think anyone can train you, I think you've got to work out as you go, cause... the child, every one of these kids are different so, you can't train to say X and Y, you've got to, you've got to experience it and kind of get through it and trial and error will eventually get you there, it's a lot of banging your head against the wall.

4.7.2.2 Intuition

The participants said that they had relied on their intuition and experience when having dealt with the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms. They said that training may have provided ideas on how to deal with these behaviours in general, but it would not have been as beneficial as their own practical experiences with these learners. The teachers valued being able to take each situation as it came and having dealt with it from their own perspective and intuition, rather than from a non-specific knowledge base of previous training. This linked to the discovery of successful strategies in having dealt with these learners, as the teachers indicated earlier, they often saw each situation as unique and they had to adapt their strategies to each individual learner, rather than having reacted in a uniform way. This may have also led to frustration and demotivation as the teachers may have begun to feel that their intuition was wrong or that they were not coping with the demands presented by these learners on a daily basis.

Participant C1 said that training may have been helpful but that she largely worked from her own intuition:

Umm, I would say about fifty percent, I would say because I, I'm doing it according to my way, but I would say it would be wonderful if we can get proper training.

Participant D2 said that her intuition and experience guided her choice of strategy used in dealing with these learners:

... to tell you the truth, there's no cut and dry, there's no black and white, umm, written thing that you could learn how to deal with this. It comes from within, it comes from your experience you've had and as I said, every incident will not warrant the same kind of strategy that you're gonna use to handle that.

4.7.2.3 Trial and error

The participants felt that the use of trial and error, as a strategy in having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, was beneficial to the learner and to themselves as teachers. They relied on their previous experiences as well as having tried other methods suggested by staff members or found through their own research. This showed the importance attributed to the value that the participants placed in their own and others experiences in the classroom. The teachers would have met with both success and failure in their use of trial and error and this may have made them feel both frustrated and proud, depending on how successful they had been. This was also associated with the teachers' preference for having used their own experiences rather than the generic and uniform training that they may have received in courses or workshops in relation to having dealt with these learners.

Participant E2 spoke of experimenting with various strategies in having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour:

Uh, alot of the time, it's a lot of uh, experimentation, trying of different things... more a trial and error and learning through experience.

Participant E3 spoke of the value she placed in having been able to find her own strategies through trial and error, rather than having been told to use strategies that may not have worked for all of her learners:

Cos you just try, it's more of a trial and error, you just do and change until you find a system that works... so it's just a trial, try try try and see basically.

It, you mostly just get thrown in in the deep end, but saying that, I find that it's the best way to learn... then you you learn more what you can do and sort of where you want to go rather than being dictated to and told exactly how you need to do it. I found that was very good for, to learn.

4.7.2.4 No substitute for experience

The participants indicated that the more experienced they became in having dealt with these learners, the easier they found it to work with the learners in their classrooms. They said that their initial training had not helped them much in their dealings with these learners, but rather their practical experience in the classroom had been invaluable in having learnt to work with the learners. The participants who had received some training in behavioural problems, mostly in their additional qualifications, said that there was no substitute for actual practical classroom experience.

Participant C3 said that she has used her experience to benefit both herself and the learners in her classroom:

I think because I've had so much experience it has become easier and I've learnt, I've learnt ways to cope and to help the child not just myself, myself and the child to cope.

Participant D1 indicated that after his initial teacher training, he had felt unprepared to deal with the learners in his classroom, but with experience he had learnt to cope better:

Initially no, but I think with time and the assistance of staff and individual experiences, you learn.

Participant D2 said that she used her previous experiences in mainstream to adapt her strategies to the special needs learners in her classroom:

It's a challenge to me initially, but because of my experience I know exactly what strategies to use to, uh, to win that child over and each individual, it's not the same... I think when I started at this school, having already so much of experience, umm, it was just a matter of adapting to this type of learners and the situation here.

The participants tended to place their practical experience in the classroom above their initial teacher training in terms of how prepared they had felt in having to deal with these learners in their classrooms. Most of the participants felt that even though they had received their initial teacher training and qualification, there had been little to no focus on special needs learners or the behavioural problems that these learners may have faced. The teachers relied on their own intuition and the strategy of trial and error when having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, and found their previous experiences invaluable in their interactions with these learners. They spoke of the learners as unique individuals and the need to adapt their strategies to these different learners, which was not something that they would have learnt from their initial teacher training. The teachers' perception that their initial teacher training had been ineffective, influenced how they felt about their own teaching abilities and their self-confidence when faced with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour for the first time. Their willingness to learn from other, more experienced staff members, and to learn from their own experiences in the classroom, allowed the teachers to identify and use their own successful strategies in dealing with these learners. The teachers made use of their experiences to make suggestions on how their experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners could be improved. Their suggestions are presented below.

4.7.3 Suggestions

The participants were asked if they had any suggestions or ideas on areas that needed improvement or practical steps that would have assisted them in having dealt with oppositional and defiant learners in their classroom. Many of the participants indicated that they would have liked to receive more specific training that focused on oppositional and defiant behaviour in their special needs classrooms by experienced experts in the field. Many had indicated that there was no substitute for experience but they also saw the value in educating themselves and the rest of the staff around the topic of these behaviours. Some of the participants indicated that a helpline or database for teachers who dealt with oppositional and defiant learners in their classroom would have been valuable as an additional support system. The participants felt that special needs school lacked the support required in having dealt with these learners and they would have appreciated more support from experts in the field, the Department of Education and Special Needs Educational Services. The participants discussed the need to be able to identify learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour before they entered the schooling system so that the school, the teachers and the parents could have been better prepared in having dealt with these learners. Some of the participants suggested a re-examination of the current CAPS curriculum in terms of the needs of special needs learners and they believed that a more skills based curriculum would have served their learners better than the current academic curriculum.

4.7.3.1 Training by experts in the field

The participants indicated that their initial teacher training had been inefficient in terms of preparing them for the learners that they had in their classrooms. Although some of the participants had completed additional qualifications, they said that they would have liked to receive more detailed and specific training in relation to oppositional and defiant learners. They said that they would have liked to learn more about current trends in dealing with these learners, from experts in the field who have had actual practical experience. They would have also liked for the training to have been aimed at special needs schools rather than a focus on having included these learners in the mainstream schooling system. This emphasised the importance of the teachers' having placed a high value on their own and others' experiences, as they would have liked to have had the opportunity to learn from experts who had dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in a face to face situation,

rather than having received theoretical knowledge from people who had not been in a special needs classroom situation. These workshops may have also given the teachers an opportunity to discuss their own successes and failures in terms of how they had dealt with these learners and to have voiced their frustration and feelings of demotivation with knowledgeable people.

Participant C1 suggested ongoing training with a focus on new developments in the field of education and managing these behaviours in particular:

ongoing courses or training... because if you do it once, umm, it doesn't help ten years later there's another one. It should be so natural that there should be very often these courses, you know, and uh, and during those courses they should inform us about the latest research that has been done, new strategies, umm, ja.

Participant C2 said that having trained teachers on these behaviours in particular, would have benefited the learners, as the teachers would have had a better understanding of these learners:

I think teachers need to be educated as to this condition, specifically so that they are aware of the consequences of how they deal with them, because you can destroy these children and make, you know, just exacerbate their behaviour tenfold if you're not aware of it... needs to be treated like any other special needs child but even though they don't present as, as a special needs child with, you know any physical umm, challenges and they still need special treatment.

Participant E1 said that more workshops were needed for special needs schools as the existing workshops tended to focus on mainstream schools:

I think we need to have more workshops. I think we are neglected, the special schools.

Participant E2 said that more training by experts in the field would have benefited the teachers professionally:

Professionally, definitely uh, more training being given to the teachers with oppositional defiant disorder learners...

Participant E3 voiced her concern about the lack of workshops and training for special needs teachers and saw this as an area in need of attention:

... there definitely needs to be more more workshops aimed at special needs... Umm, unfortunately it just goes with everything in terms of the Department, there just needs to be more support, more training, more, more everything unfortunately, you kind of, you in the dark most of the time.

4.7.3.2 Helpline and database

Some of the participants suggested the creation of a database or a helpline that could be accessed by teachers. They said that it would have been beneficial to have been able to use this database or helpline to voice their frustrations or to have asked for any help or advice that they may have needed in dealing with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This system would have allowed teachers to share their knowledge and experience with each other without having compromised their professionalism or the identities of their learners. This suggestion stemmed from the frustration and demotivation that the teachers indicated having felt earlier in this chapter.

Participant C1 suggested a helpline that teachers could have used to seek advice:

there should almost be like a helpline, that you can phone and say 'Oh, I'm battling so much and so and so'. So, they don't know who the teacher is, they don't know who the child is, so I can ask advice and also if you have frustration you can utter your frustration. Ja, towards a anonymous person, that is not so involved you know in your school.

Participant D2 made the suggestion of an up to date interactive database that allowed teachers to share their successes and failures in order to help each other in their dealings with these learners:

the next thing I think we need is a database of strategies... So, a database that indicated possible strategies and where they met success and each time that someone meets success with a certain thing... So maybe we know that maybe we have two or three strategies that we link and use maybe to a certain point... So maybe a dynamic sort of interactive system that we can constantly update... what worked, what didn't work and maybe we have people who can sort of, their formal function would be to make sure that this database is updated, that it's current and that it's effective.

4.7.3.3 Experts and support services

Participants said that they felt the need for increased support from the services that were supposed to assist their schools and the teachers themselves. They also mentioned the need for specialists such as counsellors and psychologists to be placed in their schools. They believed that having had these assets in the school would have allowed them to have sought guidance on the learners in their class that displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This provided a link between the teachers' suggestion of more training from experts in the field and the value that they placed in their own experiences and the experience of others. The teachers would have liked to have been part of a multidisciplinary team when having dealt

with these learners, which would have subsequently led to them having felt less frustration and demotivation as a consequence of the behaviour of these learners.

Participant C3 suggested having had counsellors and psychologists as part of the staff:

Well I think every school should have guidance counsellors, every special needs school should have psychologists.

Participant E2 suggested that the support structures both within and outside of the school needed to be strengthened:

more support from psychological services, uh, cos we don't have access to that and sometimes there might be psychological issues that we are not aware of. Definitely more assessments being done, more support from SNES, Special Needs Education Services, because we get nothing from them, the only time we get SNES coming to our school is when they want to put a child in our school, and then we don't see them again, ever and yet they're supposed to Special Needs Educational Support Services... Umm, more partnerships with these services... More support from parents, you know, parents rely more on us to sort their children out than anybody else. They look to us as the go to people, the miracle workers and some parents are also not equipped to handle their children and so there needs to be more support given to parents as well in dealing with the learners at home.

4.7.3.4 Identification of oppositional and defiant behaviour

The participants suggested that having been trained in the identification of oppositional and defiant behaviour in the learners would have benefited the teachers, the parents and the learners themselves. This would have allowed the teachers to have done their own research or to have spoken to others about these behaviours in order to have prepared themselves for the behaviours that they may have faced in their classrooms. While the participants previously indicated that each child who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour was unique, having been given a general picture of some of the more prevalent behaviours may have helped the teachers to prepare their classrooms and differentiate their curriculum in order to have best helped these learners achieve and to limit their oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom.

Participant D1 suggested that it would have been beneficial to have been able to identify these behaviours:

With regards to a behaviour issue like this, the first thing I'd like to know is how can I identify it accurately...

Participant D2 suggested having gathered knowledge about these learners and having identified them before they entered the school in order to have better prepared himself:

I think before we get into schools, if you can identify learners with special needs, or any particular behaviour patterns, before they get into a school. It will be beneficial to their parents and the educators who are going to be instructing them, cos if you know of a problem before you have to encounter it, you can maybe perhaps make, you know, sort of earlier preparation for it. You don't wanna be blindsided by something.

4.7.3.5 A relevant curriculum

The participants spoke of their frustration with the CAPS curriculum. They were of the opinion that the curriculum for special needs schools could be more skills orientated, rather than focused on academics. They indicated that the curriculum goals were unrealistic for the learners that were in their classrooms, as they were placed in special schools because they were unable to cope with the CAPS outcomes and goals in their previous mainstream schools. Learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour often behaved this way because of their frustration with the level of work that they were given, and having to meet unrealistic goals had intensified these behaviours. This increased the frustration and demotivation that the teachers felt because they had to teach a curriculum that they did not believe in and that appeared irrelevant to the types of learners in their classrooms. This also related to the initial teacher training that the participants received. The teachers were trained in the CAPS curriculum, but their own experiences and that of others, helped them to differentiate the curriculum for the learners in their classrooms.

Participant D2 suggested a change of curriculum with more of a focus on skills, rather than academics:

The curriculum number one, this curriculum is just not working for them, they are following the CAPS curriculum, this testing programme and things like that now, they want more hands-on skills that would help them when they leave school... The curriculum is really something that I, I just don't like... they still want us to do CAPS... Reading skills, they want us to do. The children can't read, they're already 17, 18 years old, so am I gonna go and teach them how to read now?

Participant D3 also suggested a change in the curriculum, with a move away from academics to a more skills based programme that was relevant to the learners:

If they take out that curriculum thing, the CAPS things, because it's not helping the special child... I think it will help, it will be helpful to them if we teach them skills, rather academic, because the skills is the things that they

gonna use in their lives. If we teach them crocheting, knitting, gardening, painting, sewing... these academic things really, I think it's frustrating us as educators, it's also frustrating them because they came, they came from mainstream because they are not coping in academic work, so why at special school we continue with academic too.

The participants had a variety of suggestions for having made the handling of these learners easier, either through having changed the curriculum or more workshops on the behaviours they experienced in the classroom. Some of the participants felt that special needs schools were ignored and neglected by support services and that often the teachers were left to fend for themselves. The participants also suggested the creation of a database to assist teachers who had to deal with these learners and tools that may have helped them identify learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. These participant suggestions indicated that the field of special needs education required further attention from the relevant stakeholders and support services and that the special needs teachers required outlets for their frustration and a forum in which to have been able to share their experiences with others who were in a similar situation to themselves. From these suggestions, it could also be seen that a change in the curriculum may have needed to be addressed for special needs schools as the current curriculum appeared to be have done a disservice to both the learners and the teachers.

4.8 Conclusion

The participants voiced their feelings of frustration, and demotivation as well as their experiences regarding the disruptive effect of having had oppositional and defiant learners in the classroom. This led to the experience of the teachers and the learners having been negatively affected. This negative experience influenced the achievement of curriculum goals and the way that the teachers interacted with the other learners in the class. The participants shared their experiences regarding the successful and unsuccessful strategies that they had used in the classroom when having dealt with these learners. While the mentioned successful strategies provided a sense of hope for the teachers that some strategies did work in having dealt with these learners, many of the participants felt that they had achieved little or no success with these learners. This added to the frustration and demotivation felt by the teachers and made the teaching experience in the classroom a negative one.

The participants identified the possible causes of the oppositional and defiant behaviour that they experienced. The attribution of an environmental cause for these behaviours led the teachers to believe that the behaviours were within the control of the learners and this influenced the manner in which they interacted with these learners. While teachers that saw a more biological cause for these behaviours felt that the learners were not responsible for their own behaviours, and this also influenced how they interacted with these learners. The participants also discussed their views on the effectiveness of their teacher training, the value of their experiences in the classroom and they provided suggestions for improving the conditions under which these behaviours were displayed in order to decrease the severity and prevalence of these behaviours. The participants indicated that while their initial training had left them feeling unprepared for the learners they would have faced in their classrooms, the experience that they had gained from their own classrooms and from other members of staff had proved invaluable in having helped them in their dealings with these learners. The suggestions that the participants made indicated a need for more support for special needs education teachers, and this in turn would have made the teachers' experiences of having dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour a more positive one.

The results of this study indicated that a cycle of frustration and demotivation exists within the classroom when teachers have had to deal with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. Once the oppositional and defiant behaviour had occurred in the classroom, the teacher felt frustrated and demotivated due to the disruption in teaching time, the reversal of previous achievements and successes, the apparent lack of success in the methods used in dealing with these learners, and the disregard that these learners had for their teachers. This frustration escalated in their dealings with the other learners in the class as the teachers felt that they were doing a disservice to these learners by devoting the majority of their time to the oppositional and defiant learner. They then began to look for alternative methods and strategies for dealing with these learners, by having referred back to their training and their experiences in the classroom. This then led to further frustration and demotivation as this process of trial and error often led to unsuccessful strategies being used, and the teachers began to doubt themselves and felt that they were no longer coping. Once the teachers managed to find a successful strategy in dealing with these learners, this led to satisfaction and a sense of hope that they could move forward with the learner and help the learner function more appropriately in the classroom. This was often met with further frustration and disappointment as the learners had the tendency to return to their previous

oppositional and defiant behaviours. This then began the cycle of frustration and demotivation felt by the teachers and they then began the process of trying to find an alternative successful strategy again.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the study and a comparison between previous studies, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is made. The research questions stated earlier in this study serve as the guidelines for this chapter.

The key questions of this study were:

1. What are teachers' in special needs schools experiences with oppositional and defiant behaviour?
2. What methods do these teachers find effective or ineffective in dealing with learners with oppositional and defiant behaviour?
3. What are these teachers' views on the relevance and adequacy of their training in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour?

5.2 Teachers' experiences

The teachers involved in this study voiced a wide variety of experiences that they have had when dealing with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The majority of participants expressed having felt frustrated during their dealings with these learners, due to a wide variety of factors that are discussed below. The participants also discussed a feeling of demotivation which influenced their interactions with all the learners in their classrooms and also their enjoyment of their profession. The disruption of teaching time, due to the behaviours of the oppositional and defiant learners, was also highlighted by the participants as a further negative experience. These teachers' experiences expressed in this study relate to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1994) as these experiences take place within the individual special needs classroom, which is the microsystem where both the teacher and the oppositional and defiant learners interact with each other. Bronfenbrenner (1994) spoke of the microsystem as a setting in which there is personal and social interaction that helps the individual develop. The special needs classroom provides this interaction between the teacher and the learners, even if not all interactions are positive between the teacher and the learners.

5.2.1 Frustration

The participants spoke of the high level of frustration that they felt when having to deal with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom. This was in line with the findings of Cochran et al (2014) who indicated that the teachers in their study felt frustrated due to feeling ineffective in the classroom, the disruption that this behaviour caused and the extra time that they had to spend with these learners at the expense of other learners in the classroom. The participants of the current study indicated similar feelings when describing the frustration that they experienced. The teachers in the current study spoke of how having to deal with oppositional and defiant behaviour from the learners in their classroom often led them to react angrily or aggressively, either towards the learner who displayed the oppositional and defiant behaviour or the other learners in the classroom. Fields (2012) spoke of this same feeling of aggression from the participants in his study. This aggression stemmed from the frustration felt by the teachers and it was often difficult for the teachers to control these feelings of frustration and anger when dealing with the learners in their classroom. The participants did however acknowledge that becoming emotional and angry in their dealings with these learners was an unsuccessful strategy in improving the learners' behaviour or de-escalating the situation.

The existing literature proved to have its limitations in providing the teachers with an opportunity to voice their experiences in the special needs classroom. While previous studies did raise the issue of teacher frustration (Cochran et al, 2014; Fields, 2012), this was often in the context of a mainstream educational setting, and not specifically a special needs context. The participants in this study spoke in more detail than in previous studies about the frustration that they felt. They discussed the specific behaviour that the learners displayed that led them to become frustrated and this tended to focus on the deliberate refusal to comply with an instruction or the evasion of work given to the learners. The frustration that these behaviours caused for the teachers did not appear to be discussed in previous studies. The participants also raised the issue of becoming demotivated and frustrated when the oppositional and defiant learners in their class had been managing to control their behaviour and then the learners reverted back to their previous oppositional and defiant behaviours. They felt that the continuous effort that they had put into helping these learners had been for nothing and that their previous achievements with these learners had been reversed. This source of frustration was not indicated in the studies previously reviewed. The participants

also reported that they often had to sacrifice their free time, or time away from the classroom, in order to deal with these learners and their behaviours. This was another source of frustration for the teachers as their attention was once again forcibly shifted towards the oppositional and defiant learner, rather than on other staff members or other learners. This issue was not discussed in the limited literature previously reviewed for this study.

5.2.2 Disruption of teaching time

The participants indicated that the time that was supposed to be dedicated to teaching and learning in the classroom was often disrupted by learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This was either due to the disruptive effect of the actual behaviours, the time spent away from the classroom in having to deal with these behaviours, the reactions of the other learners in the class or the disruption of the lesson and the curriculum due to having to stop teaching. The studies by Mclean and Dixon (2006) and Fields (2012) mentioned the disruptive effect of learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour on teaching time in the classroom. The participants in this study felt that the disruption caused by these behaviours was a prominent source of their frustration and demotivation. This was particularly true for the special needs context that these teachers worked in, as the teachers were under immense pressure to deal with the variety of barriers to learning evident in their classrooms, and these disruptive learners and their behaviours increased this pressure.

While the limited research on the experiences and views of teachers in dealing with these behaviours previously touched on the disruptive effects of these behaviours, this study allowed the teachers to elaborate on the exact ways that these disruptions influenced their whole teaching experience. The teachers spoke about the effect that this disruptive behaviour had on the other learners in the class. They said that the other learners were influenced by the oppositional and defiant learner and had various reactions to these learners which varied from mimicking the learner to reprimanding the learner. It also influenced the other learners in the class as their learning process ceased as soon as the oppositional and defiant behaviour had occurred and the teacher often had to leave the classroom in order to deal with the learners' behaviour.

The teachers also raised the issue of the classroom environment and how these behaviours disrupted the atmosphere of the entire classroom. A positive atmosphere in the classroom

could easily be disrupted by the oppositional and defiant behaviour of a single learner and the anger of both the teacher and the other learners in the class could lead to a negative atmosphere in the classroom. The impact of disruptive behaviour on the curriculum was also raised as an issue by the teachers. The teachers in special needs education voiced their concerns about the curriculum being irrelevant and impractical for the types of learners in their classrooms. This led to frustration for the teachers and this was further escalated by the behaviour of these learners as they often had to stop or change their lessons in order to account for the oppositional and defiant behaviours and this slowed their progress through the curriculum even further. This disruption of teaching time and progress through the curriculum would present a problem if the policy of Inclusive Education, as described in White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) were to be brought into schools. The mainstream schooling system is focused on reaching the goals set out in the CAPS curriculum in the given time, and a learner who disrupts this timeframe and the reaching of the curriculum goals, by displaying oppositional and defiant behaviour, would further frustrate the teacher.

5.2.3 Demotivation

The participants further indicated that having to deal with these learners on a daily basis often left them feeling demotivated and questioning the role that they were playing in the lives of these learners. Masekoameng (2010) found that teachers' morale and motivation was negatively affected by having to deal with oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms and this often led them to considering leaving the profession. This was similar to the feelings of the teachers in this study. The participants indicated multiple reasons and sources for their feelings of demotivation but none of the participants in this study indicated a desire to leave the profession. This may have been linked to the fact that the teachers in this study were within the special needs educational context while those in Masekoameng's (2010) study were sourced from mainstream schools.

The participants in this study felt disappointed when the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms had managed to improve their behaviour but then returned to their previous negative behaviours as the teachers began to feel that their effort and hard work had been for nothing. The teachers also spoke about the frustration and demotivation that they felt when the learners that they had managed to make progress with were then placed with other

teachers and then their work was undermined by these teachers. This relates to Bronfenbrenner's (1994) theory, and in particular, the mesosystem, as the teachers deal with these learners in the larger context of the special needs school that they work in and not just in the classroom or microsystem. These experiences are influenced, not by the teachers' actions themselves, but by other members of staff who are external to the teachers' own classrooms. Both of these teacher experiences were not discussed in the reviewed literature, which could be attributed to the fact that previous studies had not asked teachers about their practical experiences in their classrooms. Mclean and Dixon (2006) did discuss the high emotional demands experienced by the teachers in their study on having to deal with oppositional and defiant learners in the classroom. This was supported by the teachers in this study who indicated a feeling of emotional exhaustion as well as physical exhaustion due to their interaction with these learners and their lack of success in helping the learners manage their behaviour appropriately.

The lack of success that the teachers experienced with these learners was raised as a prominent source of demotivation by the teachers. They felt that their training was ineffective in helping them to come up with successful strategies for dealing with these learners and so they often experienced failed attempts in behaviour management. The teachers also felt demotivated by the disregard that these learners felt for the authority of their teachers. The teachers did not know how to successfully motivate the learners in order to get them to follow instructions given to the whole class, as the oppositional and defiant learners tended to openly defy and rebel against these instructions. The teachers also spoke about the fluctuations in their daily experiences with these learners, as they could have a highly effective teaching day with the learners and the following day could be a day in which teaching the learner was very difficult. These factors were not discussed in the reviewed literature as there was a limited focus on how the teachers felt when dealing with these learners. The teachers indicated that dealing with oppositional and defiant learners often led to them doubting their own teaching abilities and lacking the ability to cope with these learners in the classroom. This was supported by Masekoameng (2010) who also found that these disruptive behaviours made the teachers feel that they were not competent in their own classrooms and in dealing with the oppositional and defiant behaviours.

5.3 Successful and unsuccessful strategies

Previously reviewed literature tended to focus on how teachers should adapt their teaching strategies in order to deal with the oppositional and defiant behaviour and suggestions were provided on how to accomplish this (Corrie, 2002; Cummings, 2000; Rogers, 2003). The success level of these strategies was not discussed in these studies and they remained possible strategies as the teachers had not been asked about their effectiveness in the classroom, and more specifically in the special needs classroom. Strategies that the teachers had tried but had proven to be unsuccessful were also not discussed in these studies as the teachers were not asked for their input or experiences. The teachers in this study were given the opportunity to voice their experiences regarding the effectiveness or lack of success of the strategies that they had tried in their actual classrooms.

This study asked the teachers to share the strategies that they had used but had found to be unsuccessful when dealing with oppositional and defiant learners. The teachers offered a wide variety of unsuccessful strategies, strategies that led to them feeling both frustrated and demotivated. As stated above, these strategies did not form part of the reviewed literature as teachers were not asked for feedback and their unsuccessful strategies. The teachers found that attending to the learners too soon or becoming emotional themselves at any stage in their interactions with these learners proved to be unsuccessful strategies. Despite the frustration that the teachers felt they indicated that they tried their best to stay in control of their emotions. This proved difficult in the special needs context in which these teachers were in, as the barriers to learning that the other learners presented with made the management of the classroom difficult without the additional disruption of the oppositional and defiant learners' behaviour.

The teachers also found that punishment and giving these learners additional work tended to escalate the oppositional and defiant behaviour. These learners already had the impression that they were being treated unfairly by authority figures and the addition of punishment or additional tasks made them feel that they were once again being targeted. This made it more difficult for the teachers to negotiate with these learners or calm them down as the learners believed they were being persecuted. The use of vague instructions was also suggested as a possible source of escalation of oppositional and defiant behaviour. These learners tended to be defensive, especially regarding other peoples' motives, and asking them to complete a task

that they did not know the motivation behind often made them act in a more oppositional and defiant manner as they felt that they were once again being targeted. When discussing the strategies that they had used but had been unsuccessful, the teachers conveyed a sense of demotivation and frustration. This was because they had tried many different strategies, some of which had worked for a while and then failed, or they had still not found a strategy that had proved to be effective in dealing with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms.

The previous studies (Corrie, 2002; Cummings, 2000; Rogers, 2003) provided advice for teachers on how to alter their teaching to improve their classroom environment and interactions with oppositional and defiant learners. These studies were based on the mainstream schooling system and did not provide information as to whether these strategies had proven successful in the classroom context. This study focused on the strategies that teachers used in their special needs classrooms. The teachers were able to indicate the strategies that they had used that had been successful and how successful they had been, even if only for a short period of time, before the oppositional and defiant learners returned to their previous behaviours. The reviewed literature (Corrie, 2002; Cummings, 2000; Rogers, 2003) did report that building a relationship with these learners and focusing on more positive behaviours rather than their negative behaviours were possible suggestions for dealing successfully with these learners. The participants in this current study mentioned the same successful strategies. They felt that these learners performed better and were more compliant with a teacher that they had a mutually respectful relationship with and with a teacher who reminded them of their good behaviour rather than focusing on their negative behaviours.

The additional successful strategies that the participants of this study discussed were not mentioned in the reviewed literature and they provide a new perspective on how to help these learners and to reduce the frustration and demotivation felt by the teachers. This also provided a more hopeful and positive perspective from the teachers, as some of the teachers had managed to help these learners improve their behaviour in the classroom. The teachers said that giving these learners space and time to calm themselves down and not returning to the same level of work, but rather to previous levels of success, once the learner had calmed down had proven to be successful. These strategies allowed the learner to regain his composure and to think about his previous oppositional and defiant behaviour before returning to work that he has proven to be capable of. The teachers also said that giving clear

and meaningful instructions to these learners and giving punishments that were specifically suited to each individual learner had led to a reduction in oppositional and defiant behaviour from these learners. If the learners were aware, in advance, as to why they were being asked to complete a task or what the consequences of their oppositional and defiant behaviour would be, they tended to show better control and restraint over their own behaviour. This study provided teachers with the platform to indicate both the successful and unsuccessful strategies that they had used in their classrooms.

5.4 Causes

The participants in this study indicated multiple sources of the oppositional and defiant behaviour displayed by the learners in their classrooms. Some of the indicated causes of these behaviours were discussed in the previously reviewed literature while other causes were original to this research study. A limited number of studies sourced the perceived causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour directly from the teachers themselves, while others listed the causes from alternative research sources. This study asked the teachers directly as to what they perceived the causes of these behaviours to be, based on their experiences with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms. This knowledge was based on their interactions with the learners as well as the knowledge of the background of the learners from the information in the learners' files.

The participants in this study attributed the family situation and home life of the learners, as one of the causes of learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour. This can be linked to Bronfenbrenner's (1994) exosystem, which comprises the learners' home environment and the influence that this environment has on the learners' behaviour at school. The participants indicated that the learners often mimicked the behaviours that they were exposed to in their homes and displayed these behaviours in the classroom. These learners were also influenced by the divorce of their parents, growing up with a single parent or domestic violence in the home. This was supported by some of the studies discussed in the literature review (Gargiulo, 2004; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Jensen, 2005; Kauffman, 2005, cited in Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008; Jacobsen, 2013), in which the difficulty of the learners' home life was put forward as a possible cause of oppositional and defiant behaviour. The participants in this current study also said that the ineffective handling or spoiling of these learners in the home environment tended to increase their oppositional and defiant behaviour as they expected the

same spoiling behaviour from their teachers and peers at school. This linked to the suggestion in previously reviewed literature that the parenting style used in the homes of these learners influenced the degree to which these learners displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom (Smith and Bondy, 2007; Jacobsen, 2013). These authors indicated that both excessively passive and overly strict parenting was often linked to an increase in oppositional and defiant behaviour. While the teachers in the current study did not mention parenting styles directly they spoke of attention seeking behaviours and a sense of entitlement that stemmed from the home environment and which impacted on the behaviour of the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms.

The studies reviewed in the literature review referred to a feeling of anxiety and possible task avoidance from these learners as a possible cause of oppositional and defiant behaviour (Smith and Bondy 2007; Gargiulo, 2004; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Jensen, 2005; Kauffman, 2005, cited in Pierangelo & Giuliani). These authors indicated that learners who appeared to struggle in an academic area at school, tended to become oppositional and defiant in order to avoid the required task or to draw the attention away from their area of difficulty. Richardson (2014) said that these learners became oppositional and defiant in order to avoid embarrassment in front of their teachers and their peers as they feared being viewed as a failure and they already had an existing feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem. While the teachers in the current study did not speak directly of the learners' difficulties at school, it was taken for granted as the learners were in special needs schools and all experienced at least one barrier to learning. The studies mentioned above were based on the mainstream educational system. The teachers in this study, rather than referring to anxiety that the learners may feel regarding their barriers to learning, spoke of the pre-existing disorders or conditions that the learners in their classes had. These conditions were said to be a possible additional source of the oppositional and defiant behaviour displayed by the learners or they may have escalated the behaviour that these learners display due to the frustration that the learners felt. This frustration comes from knowing that they struggle in a certain area of schooling, due to the condition that they have, such as attention deficit difficulties or a specific learning disorder. The feeling of frustration or not wanting to appear to be a failure in front of their peers is similar to that discussed in the studies mentioned above and as the teachers said, could lead to an increase in the display of oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom.

The teachers in this study also said that a family that consisted of working parents may lead to an increase in oppositional and defiant behaviour from the learners in these homes. This was due to the lack of parental supervision and the learners need for attention not being fulfilled as the parents were too busy. This factor was not specifically mentioned in the previous studies. The teachers also raised the issue of the media and a lack of boundaries on the television programmes that the learners are exposed to, as a possible cause of oppositional and defiant behaviour. They said that these learners are exposed to inappropriate manners of conflict resolution and violence in the programmes that they watch and they bring this into their real-world conflicts and the classroom situation. This issue was not raised by the previous studies. The teachers also said that it was often difficult to name just one cause for these behaviours, and that there was often a combination of causes that led to the learners' display of oppositional and defiant behaviour. This was supported by the previously reviewed literature which named multiple causes of these behaviours in the classroom (Gargiulo, 2004; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Jensen, 2005; Kauffman, 2005, cited in Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008; Jacobsen, 2013; Smith and Bondy, 2007).

The previous studies spoke of possible causes of the learners' oppositional and defiant behaviour that the teachers in this current study did not mention. Additional causes that were identified include a desire for power and attention (Smith and Bondy, 2007) and the level of responsibility an ownership that the learners were able to take for their own behaviours and if they were in control of their actions (Andreou and Rapti, 2010; Tait, 2003, cited in Macleod, 2010). The learners' experience of trauma was also indicated as a possible cause of an increase in oppositional and defiant behaviour (Gargiulo, 2004; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Jensen, 2005; Kauffman, 2005, cited in Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008; Jacobsen, 2013), these same authors said that bereavement could also lead to oppositional and defiant behaviour. Smith and Bondy (2007) also listed poverty and the actions of the mother both before and after her pregnancy as significant causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour.

5.5 Training

The participants in this study were asked if they felt that their initial teacher training had equipped them adequately for dealing with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms. The majority of the teachers felt that their initial teacher training had been inadequate and many of them had felt the need to complete additional qualifications in order

to cope with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms. This was supported by the reviewed literature which stated that teachers had felt underprepared and inadequately trained, when they were asked directly (Mohamed and Laher, 2012; Mclean and Dixon, 2006). The teachers in the current study also voiced a need for more specialised training by experienced experts in the special needs educational field rather than the workshops that were provided with a focus on including special needs learners in mainstream schools. The teachers did not speak specifically about receiving training on the adaptation of the CAPS curriculum as Erradu and Weeks (2013) did, however they did discuss the need for a more suitable curriculum for the learners in their classes, which would need to be workshopped with the relevant stakeholders and then training would follow.

The teachers in this current study varied in the number of years that they had been teaching and how recently they had qualified. These teachers, both the long serving teachers and the more recently qualified teachers, indicated that they believed their initial training to have been inadequate. Many of the teachers had completed additional qualifications in order to better prepare themselves for dealing with learners with barriers to learning, including those who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. This was the case, regardless of how recently the teachers had initially qualified. The previously reviewed literature provided a limited focus on teachers views on the training they had received and did not differentiate between those teachers who had qualified more recently and those teachers who were longer serving in the profession.

The participants in this study placed great value in their practical experiences in the classroom over the initial training that they had received. While they believed that training would benefit both themselves and the learners in keeping them up to date with the latest developments in special needs education and helping them to identify learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour, they believed that their experiences and those of the staff around them were of more value to them. This was supported by Mohamed and Laher (2012) who said that teachers found their own experience in the classroom environment more useful in their profession and daily teaching than the training that they had received. The teachers in this current study said that they relied heavily on their own intuition and the strategy of trial and error, both of which were based on learning from their own experience and that of other teachers. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) chronosystem applies to the value that the teachers placed on their experiences, as the teachers would have gained increasing experience the longer that

they taught and dealt with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. While the teachers felt that training may be beneficial, they were of the view that there was no substitute for experience and that because each learner was a unique individual with unique behaviours and reactions, it would be difficult to provide conclusive training on dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour that would apply to all learners in all classrooms. There was a limited focus on the value of experience in special needs classrooms in the previous literature and studies.

The participants in this study were asked for suggestions as to how their own experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners could be improved and what they would like to see happen to make their experiences more positive ones. The previously reviewed literature did not focus on getting the personal views of the teachers and so there was a limited focus on possible suggestions for going forward. The teachers in this study suggested more frequent training and workshops from experts in the field and from people who had actually worked in the special needs context. This was supported by Erradu and Weeks (2013) and Mclean and Dixon (2006), who indicated that more training, university courses and workshops would benefit teachers in their dealing with these learners. The participants also suggested creating a database or helpline in which special needs teachers could have access to previously successful strategies and advice from other teachers who were dealing with similar behaviours and learners. While the teachers in this study were referring to an external database and helpline in which they could maintain their anonymity and that of their school and learners, they did mention the value that they placed in learning from the experiences of the teachers in their own schools and this too was a source of support for the teachers within their schools. This was supported by Richardson (2014) who made the recommendation of teachers sharing their experiences and knowledge with each other in a collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership.

This need for support was further explored by the teachers in this study in their suggestion that special needs schools be allowed to employ mental health professionals to work within the schools, rather than externally. They made the suggestion that psychologists and school counsellors be employed in schools in order to assist both the learners who display a variety of barriers to learning and to assist the teachers in finding ways of dealing with the oppositional and defiant behaviour displayed by the learners in their classrooms. This recommendation was supported by Jacobsen (2013) who said that teachers felt that referring

their learners to mental health professionals outside of the school was ineffective and that these professionals should form part of the school itself. The participants in this current study also felt that the support services that were tasked with providing the special needs schools with support needed to be re-examined. They said that both the Department of Education and Special Needs Educational Services, did not provide their schools with the required support and the teachers often felt neglected by these support services. This made their task of teaching and working with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour even more difficult as they were unable to rely on the support system that was supposed to be in place. This was further supported by Mclean and Dixon (2006) who reported that the teachers in their study had suggested an increased level of support, due to the high emotional requirements of dealing with these learners. This is related to Bronfenbrenner's (1994) macrosystem, as it focused on the special needs education system as a whole and the external support structures that the teachers felt that they required in order to improve their interactions with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms.

The participants in the current study also made the suggestion of improved training in how to identify specific disorders or behaviours, such as oppositional and defiant behaviour, before the learners enter the school. They said that this would better help them and the school prepare for these learners and work on strategies before the learners arrive in their classrooms. They also said that it would increase their confidence in their ability to teach these learners and to better understand both the learners and where the parents of the learners were coming from. The final suggestion from the participants was a change in the current curriculum that they were expected to teach. They felt that the CAPS curriculum was irrelevant and unsuitable for the learners in their classrooms and that the special needs curriculum needed to be more skills based and practical rather than academic. These suggestions were not mentioned in the previously reviewed literature as the studies did not focus on special needs school in particular and these issues and suggestions being raised by the participants of this study are unique to the special needs schooling system.

5.6 Theoretical perspective - Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1994) listed five systems that play a role in a person's development. These systems were discussed in Chapter 2. The first system was the microsystem and in the context of this study, this related to the individual special needs classrooms of each teacher involved in the study. It was in this system that the teachers experienced the most frustration and demotivation as this is where they had the most interaction with the learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The teachers were frustrated by the strategies that they had used and found to be unsuccessful in the classroom, and by the ineffectiveness of their initial teacher training in finding new strategies that were successful in helping these learners reach their potential. It was within this microsystem that the teachers expressed the most frustration and demotivation as it was within this system that they interacted personally with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classes, and where they had the most negative experiences. The next system described by Bronfenbrenner (1994) was the mesosystem and this was the special needs school in which these teachers are employed. Here the teachers spoke of the link between the emotional exhaustion that they felt when dealing with these learners during the school day, and the feeling of exhaustion that they took home with them at the end of the school day. They also spoke of the impact that the other teachers in the school had on their levels of frustration and demotivation when those teachers interfered with the hard work that they had done with those learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour. The context of being in a special school proved to be a challenging one for the teachers, and these challenges were often taken home with the teachers after school. This mesosystem provided the link between the time the teachers spent at school, dealing with these learners, and the emotional stress and negative feelings that they transferred to their home environment.

The next system was the exosystem, which in this study, was related to the home environments of the oppositional and defiant learners. The teachers indicated that the home environment of these learners was one of the main causes for these behaviours. They said that learners who were exposed to difficult home environments, divorce, and passive or authoritarian parenting styles often displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms. They said that this was often due to the learners mimicking the behaviours from home or expecting to have everything their own way, like in their home environment. This

exosystem was one of the systems in which the teacher had the least influence, but which appeared to have a significant impact on the oppositional and defiant behaviours displayed by learners in the classroom. The fourth system was the macrosystem. In this study, this related to the entire special needs educational system and the support structures that the teachers were supposed to rely on. The teachers voiced their disappointment in the support structures that were supposed to be in place to assist them with learners who displayed these behaviours. They said that these support structures were lacking and that they did not have any external support from Special Needs Education Services or the Department of Education. This led to the suggestion, from the teachers, of an external database or helpline that would help them deal with these learners. In this system, the teachers felt that their professional development and the development of the learners in their classrooms were impaired by the lack of support services provided to their special needs schools. The final system was the chronosystem, which related to how the special needs educational system has changed and how over time, the teachers have increased their knowledge of these learners. The teachers said that their initial teacher training had been ineffective, but that they had furthered their studies by completing additional qualifications during their years of teaching. They also said that their years of experience, and that of the other teachers in the schools, had helped them in dealing with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classes. This system showed that teachers' years of experience in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners was invaluable in helping them to work with these learners and improved their own professional development as special needs teachers.

5.7 Conclusion

The teachers in this study were all currently teaching in special needs school and all had experience with at least one learner who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in their classrooms. While the majority of the teachers found their dealing with these learners to have been a negative experience, with many failed strategies and disappointments, they remained committed to continue trying to reach these learners and to guide them through the schooling system. The teachers expressed their frustration and demotivation as their main experiences when dealing with these learners, but they also spoke of the successes that they had had with the learners. This provided a sense of hope that there are strategies that help these learners deal effectively with their behaviours, even if these strategies may stop working after a while and new strategies need to be found. The teachers also voiced their prominent need for

support, both from the designated support services and from the staff that they work with, as dealing with these learners on a daily basis was described as emotionally taxing and often left the teachers feeling like they were failing the learners and themselves as teachers. This study gave the teachers a voice that very few studies had done previously, particularly in the special needs context and it showed that oppositional and defiant behaviours in the special needs classroom are a challenge to the teachers who deal with them, but that teachers are willing to take on that challenge. It is however a challenge that they should not be experiencing alone and they need support and assistance in order to do the best that they can in their chosen profession of special needs education.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter serves to discuss the recommendations for practical improvements that could be made, based on the results of the current study. The limitations of the study and the possibilities for future research are also discussed.

6.2 Summary of findings

The teachers in this current study described their experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in their special needs classrooms. These experiences were described as frustrating and often led to feelings of demotivation, largely due to the disruption that these behaviours caused for the teacher, the other learners in the class and for the required curriculum goals. The teachers found dealing with these learners to be emotionally exhausting, but still voiced a strong feeling of motivation to assist these learners in reaching their full potential. The strategies used by the teachers were described as either successful or unsuccessful, and often the successful strategies lost their efficacy over a period of time as the oppositional and defiant learners returned to their previous behaviours. The teachers found themselves in a position where they had to constantly come up with new strategies, based on each individual learner who displayed these behaviours, in order to maintain the discipline in their classroom and to continue with the teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

Dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom proved challenging for many of the teachers and this situation was made worse by the reported lack of support that the teachers received. They said that there were support structures in place that were designed to assist special needs schools and teachers in dealing with these learners, but that these support structures did not fulfil their duties. This made the teachers feel that special needs schools were neglected and they suggested an investigation into these services that were lacking. The teachers also spoke of the value that they placed in their own experiences in the classroom, as a preference to the training that they had received in their initial teacher training course. They indicated that their initial training had been largely ineffective in assisting them in dealing with the special needs learners in their classrooms, but that the

lessons that they had learnt from their own experiences and those of other staff members, had proven invaluable. The teachers also made suggestions for how to improve their experiences in dealing with these learners and these are discussed below.

6.3 Recommendations for practice

The teachers in the current study were asked to make suggestions for how to improve their experiences in dealing with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour in their special needs classrooms. The recommendations made here for future interventions and practical interventions are based on their suggestions. The teachers felt that special needs schools and teachers were neglected in terms of the training that they received and the workshops that were offered. These training opportunities and workshops were often aimed at mainstream teachers and schools. Workshops and training opportunities should be provided to special needs schools that are presented by experts in the field of special needs and professionals who have had practical experience within these schools or with learners who display behaviours such as oppositional and defiant behaviours. This would make special needs teachers feel that their needs were being considered and that they were no longer being neglected.

The teachers also suggested the creation of a database or helpline that would assist them in dealing with these learners. A nationwide support system could be created that would be administered by knowledgeable and experienced special needs staff. This would allow the teachers to make contact with an expert in the field, while maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of their school, learners and themselves. The teachers would then be able to discuss the challenges that they were facing, the strategies that they have already tried and the frustration and demotivation that they were feeling in relation to dealing with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour. The teachers also suggested receiving training specifically in the identification of learners with specific barriers to learning, such as oppositional and defiant behaviour. This would assist teachers in formulating their strategies for dealing with these learners, and in working with the parents of these learners. It would allow the teachers to plan their lessons and differentiate the content and pace of the lessons, with a contingency plan that takes the behaviour of these learners into account.

It was also suggested that the support services that are in place to assist special needs teachers and schools need to be re-examined as they do not provide the required support. Special Needs Education Services (SNES) and the Department of Education (DoE) are tasked with providing special needs schools with assistance in terms of the learners in their schools and the appropriate placement of learners in special needs schools. The support from these services is lacking and both services are usually only available on the initial admission of a learner to a special needs school. The DoE and SNES should play a more active role in supporting special needs teachers and special needs school, even after a child has been admitted to the school, as the teachers require ongoing support in dealing with the learners, including those who display oppositional and defiant behaviour.

The teachers also suggested the need for mental health professionals, such as school counsellors and psychologists, to form part of the staff of the school, rather than being external agents. Special needs schools require a report from a psychologist in order to accept the learner for a period of assessment before they accept that learner into the school. This report is often written by external psychologists, who are unaware of the acceptance criteria and ethos of the school. Psychologists should form part of the multidisciplinary team in special needs schools, as many of the learners, and teachers would benefit from the additional support that these professionals could offer on the school premises. A more holistic intervention programme could be created for learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviours with the assistance of occupational therapists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, teachers and psychologists who were all employed at the special needs school. Finally, the teachers suggested a change in the current curriculum that would make it relevant to special needs learners. Learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour were often rebelling against the work that they were doing in the classroom, as the work was either irrelevant or too difficult for the learner. A curriculum that was specific to special needs schools and catered for their more practical and skills based needs should be investigated by the DoE as the teachers have stated that the current CAPS curriculum is poorly suited to the needs of the learners in their schools and this places these special needs learners at a further disadvantage.

In addition to the suggestions made the teachers who participated in this study, the following recommendations are highlighted: The emotional well-being of the special needs teachers needs to be made a priority, as it is important to keep them in the teaching profession and to

avoid burnout. This could be improved by providing opportunities, either through the school or the DoE, for the teachers to receive workshops on relaxation or to attend functions outside of school that allow them to avoid a preoccupation with the challenges that these learners present. The DoE could also consider providing workshops that are more practical and interactive with a focus on the sharing of teachers' experiences, their frustrations and their successes in order to help each other improve their own strategies and to make the DoE aware of the challenges that they, as teachers of oppositional and defiant learners, are facing in their classrooms. The teachers spoke of the lack of support that they as special needs teachers receive from the existing structures and role players. This could be improved by the creation of a special needs education forum that would include representatives from each of the special needs schools in Pietermaritzburg, and would meet regularly to provide the necessary support and advice. This would provide some of the much-needed support without including outside role players. Finally, initial teacher training courses should include a component focussing on special needs education and the challenges faced by special needs teachers. This would make the transition from mainstream schools to special needs schools easier for teachers and they would have some knowledge of what to expect in a special needs school context.

6.4 Conclusions based on findings

In relation to the research questions presented in this study, the following conclusions can be reached. The teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in their special needs classrooms were frustrating and demotivating and often led to the teachers questioning their own abilities and teachers. It was found that dealing with these learners was often a negative experience, combined with moments of pride and excitement when a strategy had worked, followed by moments of disappointment when the learner returned to their previous behaviour. This shows that teachers face a challenging experience when dealing with these learners in their classrooms, and this influences how they react to these learners and the other learners in the class. In relation to the strategies that teachers found to be effective and ineffective when dealing with oppositional and defiant learners, it can be concluded that the majority of the strategies that had been used had been ineffective and that the effective strategies soon became ineffective when learners returned to their previous behaviours. This means that special needs teachers face many challenges when finding strategies that help them deal with these learners and that this process of trial and error could

be frustrating and demotivating for the teachers. The final research question referred to the teachers' views on their initial teacher training. It can be concluded that the initial teacher training had been inadequate in preparing the teachers for dealing with the oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms, and that teachers relied more on their own experiences rather than their training. This shows that teachers need to feel better equipped to deal with these learners upon completing their initial teaching qualification, as they have not yet acquired the necessary experience that longer serving teachers find useful.

6.5 Implications for policy and theory

The experiences of the teachers that deal with learners who displayed oppositional and defiant behaviour indicate that there does need to be changes in the policies regarding the training that they receive and the support that should be receiving. The training of teachers needs to be in-line with and relevant to the current learners that are placed in special needs schools. The entire composition of the class needs to be taken into account when teachers are trained in the different disorders or barriers to learning, as having a variety of learners with varying barriers to learning can influence the management of the classroom, depending on the composition of the other learners in the class. The support structures provided by the DoE need to be improved and strengthened with more input and attention being given to special needs schools. This could entail more site visits to the schools, more consideration to be given in placing learners in special needs schools and more workshops or in-service training that is relevant to special needs schools in particular. The policy of Inclusive Education should be clarified and re-examined by the DoE, to help special needs schools understand their current role, as they are not functioning as the resource centres that they are described as and are accepting an increasing number of children into their schools.

Both the teachers and the learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour should be viewed in a holistic way. This means that the teachers emotional needs, as expressed in their experiences in dealing with these learners, should form part of their development as teachers. In terms of the implications for theory, this aspect should be emphasised more, as it is often a neglected aspect of the teachers experience and development, as the focus is often on the learners themselves. Theories on the training of teachers, and the methods that teachers are taught during their training could be supplemented with theories on emotional well-being and avoiding burnout. This would help provide the holistic training that teachers would require to

give of their best on the classroom and this would influence the success that the learners experience in reaching their potential, as their teacher would be better prepared and emotionally healthier.

6.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the current study include the primary focus of both the local and international literature on mainstream education rather than on special needs education. The literature tended to focus on possible ways of dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour in the classroom but paid less attention to teachers' actual experiences of having to deal with these behaviour daily in the classroom. This provided little guidance for the current study as the topic had not been explored previously, and the previous research could not be used to structure and guide the current study.

The research was also conducted in two different types of special needs school, one which catered for more able learners and another that catered for learners with intellectual disabilities. This may have limited the data that was obtained as schools for specific physical barriers to learning, such as schools for the visually or hearing impaired, did not form part of the current study. The experiences expressed by the teachers at the two different types of special schools also had the potential to differ as they taught different types of learners depending on the learners that their schools catered for.

The use of single interviews, which were of a short duration, with the teachers may have limited the amount and quality of the data received from the teachers. Due to the time constraints of both the study and the time available to the teachers, the interviews were all conducted either after school or during the teachers' free periods. This may have also influenced the quality of the data as the teachers may have been tired from a full day of teaching or they may have been influenced by events that had occurred in the hours preceding the interview. The inconsistency in the interview environment across the three special needs schools may have also been a limitation, as some interviews were conducted in the privacy of a boardroom, while other interviews were conducted in the teachers' classrooms, with learners present in the classroom. This influenced the rhythm of the interviews, as in some cases the learners had to be attended to or distracted before the interview could continue. The current study may also have been limited by the subjectivity of the researcher as I had

previous working relationships with some of the participants, and this may have influenced how they responded to the questions in the interviews. My limited experience with the skill of interviewing people may have also limited the quantity and quality of the research data.

6.7 Future research

As was previously stated in the literature review, the field of special needs education is a neglected area of research. It would be of value for more research to be done in special needs schools, both from the perspectives of the teachers and the learners themselves. The impact of the current CAPS curriculum on both special needs learners and teachers would be a beneficial area of study, as it could lead to possible policy change. The current study examined the teachers' experiences of dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms, the same area could be researched but from the perspective of the learners who display these behaviours, as their voices were also ignored in the previous literature. With the potential implementation of inclusive education in the future, both learners and teachers in the mainstream schooling system could be asked about their experiences in dealing with these behaviours in their current classrooms and a similar study to the current study could be done in full service schools in order to prepare both teachers and learners for the possible inclusion of oppositional and defiant learners in their classrooms.

The teachers in the current study spoke of many different causes of oppositional and defiant behaviour. These causes and other identified causes could form the basis for a research study to determine why these learners behave in these ways, so that both teachers and parents can play a role in helping these learners reach their potential. A study that examined the support structures that teachers do have available to them and those that are lacking, would be of value as both the advantages and disadvantages of this support would then be identified and rectified. Finally, a comparison between schools that have psychologists and school counsellors in their employment, and those that do not, would be important in determining the need for these professionals in schools and may influence the policies of the DoE.

6.8 Conclusion

This study showed that teachers that deal with learners who display oppositional and defiant behaviour have a variety of experiences with these learners and that they are often frustrated and demotivated by these experiences. The lack of support from external sources was also

highlighted and the teachers' suggestions for future improvements was discussed. The limitations of the current study and suggestions for possible future research were also discussed.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Permission to conduct study from the Education Department



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane

Tel: 033 392 1004

Ref.:2/4/8/375

Mrs S Hart
PO Box 100041
SCOTTSVILLE
3209

Dear Mrs Hart

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN DEALING WITH OPPOSITIONAL AND DEFIANT LEARNERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS CLASSROOMS"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 15 March 2015 to 15 March 2016.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. (See list attached)

Nkosingathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 31 March 2015

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa ...dedicated to service and performance
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 **beyond the call of duty**
EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za / Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za
CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: WWW.kzndoe.gov.za

Appendix B: Ethical Clearance from the UKZN Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee



03 June 2015

Mrs Samantha Hart 215079437
School of Applied Human Sciences - Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Hart

Protocol reference number: HSS/0495/015M
Project title: Teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms.

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 18 May 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shonuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Carol Mitchell
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken
cc School Administrator: Mr Sbonelo Duma

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Appendix C: Letter seeking principal permission to conduct study



11 June 2015

To the Principal of _____ school,

My name is Samantha Hart. I am an Educational Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am conducting a research study regarding teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms. I am interested in how teachers experience these behaviours in the classroom and some of the strategies that they employ to manage these behaviours. I am also interested in their views on the adequacy and relevance of their training in dealing with these behaviours and if they make use of this training or employ alternate methods.

I am interested in interviewing teachers who work at your school and hereby request your permission to recruit participants from your staff. I would like to come to your school at a time convenient to you and inform your staff about my study. Volunteer participants will then be individually interviewed at a time that is convenient to them.

I would like to request your permission to conduct this study in your school.

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me by email at samhart@psyc.co.za (Tel: 083 3081325). You can also contact my supervisor Carol Mitchell on mitchellc@ukzn.ac.za (Tel: 033 260 6054). If you have any concerns about the nature of the study at any point, you may also contact UKZN's Human Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Tel: 031 260 3587) or email HssrechHumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

Samantha Hart
0833081325
samhart@psyc.co.za

Appendix D: Information Sheet for participating teachers



Request for your participation in a study: Teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms

Dear Educator,

My name is Samantha Hart. I am an Educational Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am interested in teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms. I am interested in how you experience these behaviours in the classroom and some of the strategies that you employ to manage these behaviours. I am also interested in your views on the adequacy and relevance of your training in dealing with these behaviours and if you make use of this training or employ alternate methods. I would like to request your participation in this study.

Your participation in this study will involve being interviewed at a time convenient to you. The interview, which will be approximately an hour long, will consist of questions around your experiences in the classroom in dealing with oppositional and defiant behaviour and demographic information will be requested but pseudonyms will be used so that you will not be identified in the write up of the research report. The researcher requests your permission to make audio recordings of the interview for data collection and transcription purposes. If you consent to this recording please sign and return the attached audio recording consent form.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are also within your rights to choose not to answer any specific question that you do not want to respond to. You can withdraw your consent at any time, and there will be no repercussions.

If you choose to participate in this study I cannot unfortunately offer any direct benefits to you for participating. I do not think there are any risks to your participating in this study as you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that signed informed consent forms are stored by myself and are not accessible to anyone else. These consent forms will be kept for a period of five years in a locked drawer and will then be destroyed via shredder. Pseudonyms will be used in place of your name and the name of your school in order to protect these identities. When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Information from this study could be used for further research or published in journal articles in the future.

On completion of the study, the research findings can be sent to you via email upon the request of this information.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me by email at samhart@psyc.co.za (Tel: 083 3081325). You can also contact my supervisor Carol Mitchell on mitchellc@ukzn.ac.za (Tel: 033 260 6054). If you have any concerns about the nature of the study at any point, you may also contact UKZN's Human Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Tel: 031 260 3587) or email HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

Appendix E: Teacher consent forms

Please sign and return the following if you choose to take part in this study:

CONSENT:

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to being interviewed about my experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms. I understand that I am not forced to participate in this study, and that I can withdraw at any point should I no longer wish to take part.

Signature

Date

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

Demographics

What grade do you currently teach?

What grades have you taught previously?

How many years have you been teaching?

How many of those years have been in a special school?

What qualifications do you have?

How many learners do you have in your current class?

How would you describe your physical teaching environment in terms of space, comfort, equipment and teaching materials?

Oppositional and Defiant behaviour

How would you define oppositional and defiant behaviour?

Prompts will be given if the teacher struggles to define this term. (For example, behaviours such as refusing to perform a requested action, talking out of turn or refusing to be quiet when asked.)

What do you view as the most common form of these behaviours?

How many of these learners would you describe as defiant and oppositional?

How do you think this behaviour impacts on the rest of the class or classroom experience?

How are these learners perceived in the staffroom or by other staff members?

Personal Experiences

How does having to deal with this type of learner behaviour make you feel?

How would you describe your ability to cope with the difficulties this behaviour presents?

Have you noticed any change in the number the number of learners behaving in this way in your class over the last few years?

What is your initial reaction to these behaviours during teaching time?

What are the usual consequences of this behaviour?

How do the other learners in the class react to this behaviour?

If the situation escalates, what do you do to resolve the conflict?

What methods of dealing with this behaviour have you found to be unsuccessful?

What methods of dealing with this behaviour have you found to be successful?

What do you believe is the most common source of these behaviours?

Follow up: How does this influence how you react to these learners?

Training

What sort of training did you receive in dealing with these behaviours during your teacher training course?

Have you had any subsequent training? Yes/no – follow up: Could you describe this training?

Where do you source your classroom management strategies from for dealing with these learners?

Does your school have a policy in place for dealing with these behaviours?

Follow up: Could you describe it briefly?

Do you believe that you have been adequately equipped or trained to deal with these behaviours in the classroom?

Is there a support system in your school to help you deal with these learners?

Follow up: Can you describe it briefly?

What systems would you like to see put in place, either locally or nationally, to help you empower yourself as a teacher of these learners?

Appendix G: Audio recording consent form

Consent form for audio recording of interview

The researcher requests your permission to make audio recordings of the interview for data collection and transcription purposes. Any identifying data will not be included in the write up of the report and pseudonyms will be used. The recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Your permission is sought in order to record the interview.

I consent to allowing the researcher to make an audio recording of the interview for data collection and transcription purposes.

Signature

Date

Appendix H: Turnitin Report

Final thesis			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
% 6	% 5	% 1	% 3
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source		% 1
2	Submitted to Bond University Student Paper		% 1
3	repository.nwu.ac.za Internet Source		<% 1
4	scholar.sun.ac.za Internet Source		<% 1
5	dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source		<% 1
6	Submitted to The Hong Kong Institute of Education Student Paper		<% 1
7	ir.cut.ac.za Internet Source		<% 1
8	Submitted to University of Pretoria Student Paper		<% 1
9	Fields, Barry. "Getting the balance right: The challenge of balancing praise and correction for early school years children who exhibit		<% 1