

AN EXPLORATION OF FORMER
SPECIAL-SCHOOL LEARNERS'
PREPAREDNESS FOR ADULTHOOD

By

JEROME BERNARD FRANCIS

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR JULIA PREECE

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First and foremost I express my sincere gratitude to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for giving me the wisdom, strength and guidance to complete this task and also for allowing my faith to grow. Glory be to God in the highest now and forever.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved wife Devigee and daughter Bridget Lauren, and to all learners with special needs, known and unknown to me.

Also to my late parents, Bobby Bernard and Doris Gloria Francis, who always emphasised the importance of a good education.



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

1 June 2012

Mr Jerome Bernard Francis 822828250
School of Education

Dear Mr Francis

Protocol reference number: HSS/0245/012M
Project title: An exploration of former special school learners' preparedness for adulthood.

In response to your application dated 30 May 2012, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
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cc Supervisor Professor Julia Preece
cc Dr D Davids
cc Mr N Memela/Mrs S Naicker



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ABSTRACT

Unemployment is on the rise in South Africa. Learners who attend special schools are marginalised in the labour market. As an educator in a special- needs school ('special school'), I noticed many learners returning to school to ask for my assistance to find them jobs. This inspired me to ask: to what extent does the special school that they attended prepare its learners for adulthood? What were the learners' experiences and how did the curriculum prepare them for work and socialising?

In order to answer this question, I used a case study methodology within an interpretative paradigm using semi-structured interviews with three educators and 17 former learners of a special school which is referred to as School X. The study was analysed through a theoretical framework that explored medical and social models of disability, curriculum (especially the enacted curriculum) and transformative learning.

The analysis revealed that the learners' transition to adulthood was problematic. They experienced their schooling and subsequent employment prospects predominantly through a medical model of disability which labelled and defined them, rather than environmental factors, as the problem. This was evident in the enacted curriculum in terms of content and educator responses, though there were some exceptions. Their social life rarely developed beyond family connections. Their experiences of contributing to transformative learning were often negative in that raised vocational prospects on entry to the school resulted in disillusionment by the time they left.

Again there were exceptions, however, as some former learners highlighted individual educator efforts to positively reinforce their self-esteem and thus keep their hopes up for a brighter future.

Recommendations are made for special schools to have a more appropriately designed curriculum that meets learners' context specific needs. This curriculum both for the technical and the academic learning areas must work in conjunction with work programmes followed by industry so that these learners can fit into the work programme when seeking employment. Lessons must be designed taking the learners' learning pace into consideration.

Society, and prospective employers in particular, must be conscientised about the merits of the school and special schools in general. It is recommended that there be integration between special schools and industry, and other mainstream schools. This would make people aware of the capabilities of learners with special needs and highlight the fact that they have a place and an equal chance in society.

The teachers who are involved with special education should have the appropriate training so as to be able to understand the nature of these learners and deal with them in an appropriate manner. Their training should be constantly upgraded in order to keep abreast with the latest demands of industry and employment agencies.

Post-school follow-up support must be made available to former learners to offer them career guidance and to afford them the opportunity to brush up on their technical skills and familiarise themselves with the latest trends in industry.

All stereotyped thinking must be removed from the school, starting with co-ed workshops rather than separate workshops for boys and girls. This would help to remove the one aspect of negativity that appears within the hidden curriculum.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	The African National Congress
BE	Business Economics
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS.....	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CNE.....	Christian National Education
CV	curriculum vitae
DIY	Do-it-yourself
DoE	Department of Education
DWCPD	Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities
FET	Further Education and Training
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
IMD	Intellectually mildly disabled learners
LO	Life Orientation
LSEN	Learners with special educational needs
MMR.....	Mildly Mentally Retarded
NS	Natural Science
OBE.....	Outcomes-based education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SA	South Africa
SAIRR.....	South African Institute of Race Relations
SANASE	South African National Association for Specialised Education
TV	Television
WP6.....	White Paper 6

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CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

South Africans won their struggle for liberation and equality in 1994 after many years of injustice and separation based on race classification under the political banner of apartheid, and at the high cost of many lives. Throughout the struggle, education was seen as the foundation of liberation and with the introduction of democracy in 1994, was ostensibly offered to all citizens on a level playing field. Since coming into power in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) – the current ruling party – introduced legislation, in line with its Freedom Charter of 1955, which aims to provide equal learning opportunities to all people of South Africa (SA) irrespective of race, colour or creed (ANC, 1955). This legislation also applies to people with disabilities.

This introductory chapter will provide some background information on the education system of South Africa, from how it was to where it is now. The chapter will deal with aspects of: the history of education in South Africa; apartheid education; the Bantu Education Act; Peoples Education and post-apartheid education. Also, because my area of study focuses on special- needs education, I will explore the extent to which special education was catered for during the respective periods.

In addition there will be a description of the school in this study, which for reasons of anonymity will be referred to as School X.

1.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO APARTHEID

In the mid-seventeenth century, the Cape Colony was established by the Dutch East India Company. Initially a half-way stop to the East, the Cape ultimately attracted permanent dwellers.

Both the Dutch and the British colonised South Africa during the period 1652 to 1815 (Behr, 1966). The colonisation process included a division of race groups in the country with the intention of creating a hierarchy of domination over the different groups. Education was designed to maintain those differentials through selective curricula and value judgments about the different race groups' worth in society. Initially the Dutch were not as concerned with education as they were with the economy; in fact, the first school at the Cape was only opened on the 17 April 1658, some six years after their arrival (Christie, 1991). Its purpose was solely to make the local people sufficiently proficient in understanding and carrying out tasks for the settlers (Behr, 1966; Christie, 1991). In 1815 the British took over the Cape from the Dutch (Christie, 1991). Once in control the British paid more attention to education: part of their missionary work was to establish schools and they provided missionary education with a Christian ethos designed to meet the needs of the Black slave population (Christie, 1991). However, this education also included a hidden agenda of creating a subordinate group of people under the auspices of spreading Christianity (Msila, 2007).

Trying to counter British administration, the Dutch moved further inland and orchestrated the policy of Christian National Education (CNE) based on Calvinistic principles (Behr, 1966; Christie, 1991; Kallaway, 2001). This system too, was intended

to suppress Black South Africans and to keep the political and economic power in the hands of the White minority (Kallaway, 2001; Bher, 1966).

Some 45 years after the British took over the Cape, the first group of Indians was introduced to South Africa in 1860 (Bher, 1966). They were brought to present day KwaZulu-Natal (previously referred to as Natal) to work on the sugar cane fields in and around the city of Durban. With them came a diversity of languages and religions. Schools were established for them in South Africa, the first being in Durban opened by the Reverend Ralph Stott in 1869 (Bher, 1966). Even though they made a huge contribution to the economy of the land they were also marginalised along with the local people, classified as non-whites and received a sub-standard education (Bher, 1966).

The system of differences between race groups continued to grow in South Africa until racial segregation became official when the National Party came into power in 1948. This gave rise to the system of apartheid which in simple terms meant separation. People of South Africa were treated differently on the basis of their racial identities. South Africa had one main division between race groups, namely: White and Non-white. The Non-white population group was made up of Indians, Africans and Coloured people. The White race group was privileged in all spheres of life while the other race groups were disadvantaged to varying degrees: Coloured people were more disadvantaged than the Indians and the Africans were the most severely affected (Christie, 1991). An example would be the per capita expenditure on education for the various race groups during the apartheid era. In 1989 financial aid for education from

the state for a White child was R2882, an Indian child, R2067, a Coloured child, R1221 and an African child, R656 (SAIRR survey cited in Christie, 1991).

Apartheid merely cemented the initial educational systems, provided by the Dutch and British settlers, which resulted in hierarchical identities developing among learners and further dividing society (Msila, 2007). This divide was now unavoidable as apartheid was enforced by legislation and designed particularly to limit the rights of Non-whites and to promote White supremacy and dominance (Christie, 1991).

1.2.1. The Bantu Education Act

During the 1950s, when Hendrik Verwoerd was the minister of Native Affairs, the Bantu Education Act number 47 of 1953 was passed (Kallaway, 2001; Christie, 1991; Bher, 1984). This law enforced the principles of apartheid and ensured racial segregation: it guaranteed that Black South Africans would be prevented from accessing the well-resourced and excellent educational services available to the Whites, and was the building block of the apartheid system (Christie, 1991). This legislation was well planned as an education system prepares for the future. If it is designed differentially for different groups of people it will produce differential characteristics in those people, particularly if the aim is to produce subordinate social groups (Christie, 1991). The education system was based on Verwoerd's belief that it was of no use giving Bantus (Black South Africans) more than a basic education as he strongly believed the local people of South Africa were suitable solely for menial, unskilled tasks (Kallaway, 2001; Christie, 1991; Bher, 1984). Verwoerd recognised them as being nothing more than "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Kallaway, 2001, p.12).

Due to the differences in the standards and quality of education for Blacks and Whites in SA, and the fact that the education that Blacks received did not prepare them adequately for a prosperous future, this situation ultimately led to dissatisfaction amongst learners. The irregularities within the educational system fostered tensions in South African education which culminated in the 1976 school boycotts (Christie, 1991). These boycotts were Black learners' reaction to the inferior education they received through the medium of what they referred to as the Boer language, Afrikaans, and resulted in the Soweto uprising and the events that led up to the June 16th massacre (Christie, 1991).

1.2.2. Special education under apartheid

Together with the ills of apartheid, learners with special needs had more complex issues to deal with. During the years of apartheid, learners in South Africa were educated separately depending on their race group classification together with a special education system developed to cater for learners with disabilities or impairments (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009). Apartheid special schools were therefore divided using dual criteria based on race and disability (Department of Education [DoE], 2001). The experiences of Black and White learners with special needs were different, with White learners benefitting from the system and Black learners being deprived even further. This education system kept schools for White disabled learners better resourced than those that were available for Black disabled learners (DoE, 2001). Black learners faced further problems with the limited number of schools, especially special schools, available to them and compounded by situations of extreme poverty experienced by

both mainstream and disabled Black learners, who experienced similar problems during apartheid as they lived in a divided, unequal society.

However, it must also be noted that in the past all disabled people, both Black and White, were discriminated against and marginalised because of their disability. They were not regarded as equal citizens with equal rights and responsibilities especially in the areas of education and employment (DoE, 2001).

1.3. PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

During the 1980s, the process of emancipation based on the Freirean theory of conscientisation led organisations working with Black people to develop a system of education in opposition to apartheid education (Christie, 1991). The conception of people's education was the springboard for post-apartheid education. In order to redress the education that Black people received, people's education inculcated critical thinking within Black people, highlighting the differences in the quality and standard of education for Blacks and Whites and fostering emancipatory thinking (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009).

1.4. POST-APARTHEID EDUCATION

In February 1990, the ANC and other political organisations in South Africa were unbanned which led to the demise of years of apartheid. This triggered events of transformation that culminated in the first democratic elections in April 1994.

The success of the ANC in South Africa's first democratic elections resulted in the political transformation of South Africa. This transformation encompassed all areas of

society, including education. One of the main features of the ANC Freedom Charter was to open the doors of learning to all members of society (ANC, 1955). This didn't mean just educational transformation, but more importantly that education should become instrumental to change among the people of the country (de Wet & Wolhuter, 2009). Msila (2007) confirms that educational transformation was a response to the previous apartheid education system which was characterised by diversity in favour of one race group only.

Democracy in South Africa laid the foundation for education based on human rights and socio-economic development. The bill of rights in the country's constitution prescribes that every citizen, including learners with disabilities, has a right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a). In 1994, democracy paved the way for education policymakers to address the irregularities of the apartheid education system. Drastic measures were subsequently put into place in order to afford all learners – Black, White, disabled and mainstream – equal rights and equal opportunities, thereby levelling the educational playing fields of South Africa (DoE, 2001).

Section 6 of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b) and Section 3.4m of the National Education Policy (RSA, 1996b) stipulate an educational right to all learners which is also endorsed in Section 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa ('the Constitution') (RSA, 1996a). The South African Schools Act of 1996 provides for the inclusion of learners with special educational needs without discrimination into mainstream education (DoE, 2001). This opened the way for the policy of inclusive education as highlighted in the White Paper 6 (WP6) launched by the Minister of

Education in 2001 (DoE, 2001). Inclusive education did not originate in South Africa but was influenced by trends set in other countries. However, what makes inclusive education a uniquely South African phenomenon is its “political and philosophical influence” (Landsberg, Kruger and Nel, 2005, p.17). The philosophy underlying “inclusion” claims that all people, including those with disabilities, form part of the “normal” society (DoE, 2001; RSA, 1996b) and this philosophy is guided by the new political dispensation of South Africa.

1.4.1. Curriculum 2005

Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in 1997 with the intention of meeting the needs of all learners, including learners with special educational needs (LSEN), and assisting the inclusion process (DoE, 1997; Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). Democracy saw the need for a curriculum based on neither race nor gender. Major changes occurred in the way teaching and learning happened compared to during the apartheid era. Emphasis was now on what could be learnt rather than what could be taught and all aspects of the previous CNE authoritarian leadership were demolished (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009).

C2005 was designed around job-related outcomes and guided by principles of critical thinking and creativity. Whilst C2005 emphasised education for all people, no specific mention was made of learners with disabilities. Learners with special educational needs were once again at the mercy of a subjective design which did not necessarily meet their needs.

Being designed primarily for academically inclined mainstream learners, C2005 was critiqued by the South African National Association for Specialised Education (SANASE) in 2002. SANASE felt that C2005 was too academically orientated and made no provision for vocational training which they felt was essential for intellectually mildly disabled learners (SANASE, 2002).

1.4.2. The Revised National Curriculum Statement

C2005, apparently not able to service education fully and create the desired effect, was upgraded to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2002. The intention was to mould learners of South Africa to become no longer passive but rather critically conscious citizens (Msila, 2007). Learners would therefore achieve their full potential in the new democratic South Africa (RSA, 1996a). The RNCS was designed to uplift the quality of education in South Africa. It overhauled the previous post-apartheid education system; however, it had similar intentions of eradicating imbalances with the intention of improving the quality of learning (RNCS, 2002).

The RNCS was introduced by the DoE to make education accessible to all and was underpinned by the principles of social justice, human rights, a healthy environment and inclusivity (DoE, 2002). Inclusivity makes provision for administering diversity among learners. The RNCS allows for an inclusive approach by only specifying minimum requirements for all learners. The school and the educators are expected to use these minimum requirements as the basis on which to design their curriculum, making the learning process appropriate to all learners' educational, social, emotional and physical needs (DoE, 2010).

It is from this RNCS document that special schools are supposed to draw up their programmes. They are expected to adapt information from the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) curriculum for Grade 9 (mainstream) which has to some extent made provision for vocational training (DoE, 2002). However the RNCS was replaced by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DoE, 2011). This is currently the stipulated policy on curriculum to be offered to the schools. The intention of CAPS was to improve on the RNCS and come into full effect in January 2012. Here again was a comprehensive curriculum developed for subjects on offer at mainstream schools without clear consideration for LSEN learners. In sum it was no different to the preceding policies in that the LSEN curriculum had to be an adapted version of the mainstream curriculum.

1.4.3. Review of DoE Guidelines for Special Schools

Notwithstanding the above documents, in keeping with the WP6 policy the DoE has introduced many guidelines for special education such as the National Strategy on Screening, Identification and Assessment School Pack ([SIAS] DoE, 2008), Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education, Special Schools as Resource Centres (DoE, 2005) and Guidelines to ensure quality education and support in special schools and special school resource centres (DoE, 2007). The purpose is to move away from the medical model of disability and the dual education system to an inclusive education model.

The DoE also provides a document entitled – Guidelines for inclusive teaching and learning (DoE, 2010). This document aims to ‘make classrooms accessible to all kinds of learners’ (p. 9). It focuses on concepts of ‘adaptation’ – modification or adjustment of

lessons 'to make them suitable for different learner needs'. It also refers to 'differentiation', highlighting that this 'implies adjusting tasks to appeal to the various interests, needs, aptitudes, experiences and previous achievements of individual learners' (p. 10).

The guidelines therefore argue for an ideal situation of community relations and learner-centredness and promote the social model of disability: 'all learners should be viewed in a positive light' (p. 18). Educators are encouraged to 'allow for adaptation' of the curriculum, emphasizing 'room for creativity and innovation on the part of educators in interpreting what and how to teach (p.18) ... within the framework of high expectations' (p.19). On page 20 and subsequent pages there are examples of 'differentiated and/or adapted tasks or activities and alternative assessment within a framework of assisted learner centred teaching'.

However the guidelines offer ideal scenarios for environments that are decontextualised. The guidelines therefore, fail to reflect the often individualistic nature of special needs learners and the reality of differentiated human resource capacity as well as practical facilities within schools across South Africa. Furthermore no mention is made of upgrading or in-service training for the educators to equip them to deal with the various aspects of disabilities. Le Fanu (2013, p.40) makes similar criticisms of international guidelines which make universalist assumptions about 'inclusive education in international development' and it will be seen in this study that educators and learners struggled to experience the ideal model of teaching learning.

1.5 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF “SCHOOL X”

Learners who experience barriers to learning and therefore have difficulty coping with mainstream education are accommodated in schools for learners with special educational needs (LSEN). The unit of analysis in my study is former learners of a special school in KwaZulu- Natal. School X accommodates intellectually mildly disabled learners (IMD) from mainstream schools whose academic and social difficulties resulted in them being placed at a special school. These learners are characterised by their poor scholastic abilities in reading, writing and arithmetic; low self-esteem; poor self-concept; lack of motivation to study and the inability to cope with academically orientated work (SANASE, 2002).

School X is located in what was during the apartheid era a residential area accommodating Whites in the lower socio-economic sector who were mostly unskilled and semi-skilled workers employed by the railways.

1.5.1 Origins of the school

The school was originally built to accommodate only White learners with intellectual barriers to learning, training them with a technical skill. It has a hostel facility so accommodates learners from far and wide. Physical evidence proves that the school was well equipped to cater for small class sizes (of up to fifteen learners) – some technical centres still only make provision for up to fifteen learners – for example, the needlework class still only has fifteen sewing machines.

A major part of the school's curriculum is the technical component. Technical subjects prepare the learners for connecting with the real world when they go out and work. They are provided with work experience to get the feel of what it's like to be employed in a factory-like setup. This is an opportunity for the learners to be exposed to the "real thing". The school's programme is such that there are alternate academic and technical days. This means that the learners spend alternate days in the academic centres, exposed to their different academic subjects, and in the technical centres, learning their trade for an entire day. This full day in the technical centre further prepares learners for the workplace and is of particular use to the learners who are academically challenged.

1.5.2 The school after apartheid

In 1994, the doors of the school were open to learners from all race groups, resulting in an influx of learners seeking a school with proper facilities. Although the facilities still cater for between ten to fifteen learners, especially in the workshops, numbers more than doubled and in some instances trebled. Current class lists prove that there are now as many as between twenty and thirty learners per class. In terms of socio-economic backgrounds very little has changed; almost all the learners belong to the lower socio-economic sector and live in extremely poor conditions. A daily feeding scheme has therefore been established to cater for indigent learners, and vegetables from the school garden and sponsored groceries are often distributed to needy families.

1.5.3 Current school programme

The school's programme provides learners with a 50% academic and 50% technical training programme over a six-day cycle for a period of four years. Notwithstanding the

guidelines from the DoE pertinent to special schools, the formal curriculum is primarily determined by the school's management based on the guidelines for mainstream learners, as provided by the CAPS document (DoE, 2011). More emphasis is placed on the technical component which is thought to accommodate intellectually challenged learners more appropriately in preparation for the labour market. Within the technical subjects, 70% of the course involves and assesses practical skills development, the remaining 30% focuses on theory. The academic subjects focus on language proficiency, basic mathematics, life orientation, elementary science, and arts and culture. These subjects are compulsory for all learners. The technical subjects, only for boys, include woodwork, metalwork, motor repairs, building, DIY and agriculture. The girls are exposed to needlework, hairdressing and cooking. This stereotyped gender breakdown of subjects represents the DoE's and the school's expectations of where the learners are likely to be accepted in vocations outside school.

1.5.4 School's formal curriculum

The school uses the recent CAPS document supplied by the DoE as its official guide to its curriculum. The CAPS document outlines what is to be taught and assessed but has been specifically designed for mainstream learners. It is similar to the RNCS in that no provision is made for learners with intellectual barriers to learning. Here again, with no formal guidance from the DoE as to how this document is to be adapted for special schools, the management of the school is obliged to take it upon themselves to adapt and use it in keeping with the idea of inclusive education. Since there is no prescribed uniformity, it is obvious that such adaptation of the curriculum strategies would vary from special school to special school.

1.5.5 Educator challenges

WP6 on inclusive education and training states that schools are to provide the essential educational services to learners with special educational needs (DoE, 2001). While this kind of specialised education requires the expertise of educators with specialised skills and training, WP6 makes no mention of whether educators employed by such schools are to receive the required training to meet the demands of such learners.

Teachers at School X are not necessarily trained to teach learners with special needs and therefore may technically not be fully equipped to deal with the challenges of teaching these learners. Included in their list of challenges is the fact that they have no formal curriculum for the learners admitted to this school and are obliged to follow the CAPS document. This document, designed specifically for mainstream learners, leaves the educators with no choice but to use their own interpretations on how to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of the learners. This has implications for the success levels that educators have in preparing learners for life after school. Hence facilitating special education becomes a daunting task.

In summary, the Bill of Rights poses a challenge to education in that it expects learners who experience barriers to learning, especially barriers arising from particular impairments, to be accommodated in ordinary classrooms as far as possible. Learners with special educational needs are generally those who may have difficulty in keeping pace with what is normally expected of them in the classroom and therefore will require differentiated, specialised educational programmes and services to realise their potential. Therefore, it is tacitly accepted that accommodating these learners in mainstream schools will restrict their progress and also create fears and threats for

teachers who may have to perform duties they are not trained or equipped for. This might very well still be the case at special schools but the issues are more prominent when learners with special needs are accommodated in mainstream schools.

1.6 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Being an educator at School X and working closely with the learners, my interest was aroused as to whether or not their preparedness for adulthood on leaving school, in terms of life and job- related skills, was adequate. This interest led to the focus of my study. Although there are no official records to prove it, former learners have often returned to the school seeking my assistance to write a CV and even asking for my assistance in finding jobs. I became concerned about the difficulty these learners appear to have in finding jobs in spite of the fact that they have spent four years in a technical centre whilst at school. I also became concerned about the social problems these learners appeared to encounter when they leave school, such as petty criminal activities.

From the informal narratives of these learners, employment seems to be restricted to menial job activities such as car guards or informal trading in spite of them having completed a technical course at school. Very few attend FET (Further Education and Training) colleges and even fewer complete further studies.

I therefore sought to obtain more accurate information and find out in more detail the extent to which learners are coping with the demands of adulthood especially when it comes to finding suitable employment and socialising. While I do understand that society, family and peers contribute greatly to how an individual's life unfolds, my

question was: has the school played its part in sufficiently preparing learners for adulthood?

To explore this question I used a case-study approach, interviewing former learners and teachers who work in one special school (School X). I worked within an interpretive paradigm in order to obtain an understanding of the multiple meanings the school has had for the learners. The intention was to explore whether or not the special schooling system and its curricula – formal, hidden, intended and actual – had prepared learners to meet their needs as adults, and how learners addressed their challenges in the outside world.

1.7 THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theories and models informing my research are based on the behavioural and humanistic curriculum theories, theories of transformative learning and two models of disability. I draw on these theories and models because of their interrelated relevance to my topic. Models of disability provide an understanding of how people with disability labels are affected in terms of their identity and self-esteem and how they are viewed by others. These models will have an impact on the curriculum design that such learners engage with, the attitudes to and held by these learners and their teachers in relation to how and what is learnt, and in turn the extent to which individuals experience learning which could have transformative qualities in terms of insights and critical thinking that would facilitate their transition to adulthood. Chapter Two will discuss this framework in more detail.

1.8 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent did the special school prepare the learners for adulthood?
 - 1.1. What were the learning experiences of the learners at school?
 - 1.2. How did the school and the curriculum prepare learners for the world of work and socialising?
2. How can the school curriculum be improved for better preparation for work and adult living?

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to my study is a case study which comprises an in-depth analysis of the former LSEN learners' experiences and feelings about what and how they learned in school that influenced their ability to cope as adults after leaving school. The learner responses will be compared with selected educator responses and documents that reflect the official educational aims for the learners.

1.4.1. Sources

Sources of information include purposively selected educators and former learners at the school. The data is cross-referenced where relevant with publicly available documents including the South African School Act, mission and vision statements of School X, curricula, syllabi, course structures, lesson schedules and lesson plans.

1.9.1 Participants

The interview participants were intended to be three school educators and 20 former learners. The selected learners were 10 females and 10 males who had left school within the last two years. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years. It transpired that only 17 learners were interviewed because 3 females declined to participate after initial contact was made.

1.9.2 Data collection and data analysis methods

Working qualitatively, data were collected in the form of open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were administered in an interactive but relaxed manner at a place convenient to the participants. The participant responses were thematically coded and then analysed to check for coherence, overlaps, similarities and differences and this afforded me the opportunity to draw inferences and conclusions. The participants' insider information about relevant life experiences contributed to the rich detail needed for my study.

The educators' stories about their teaching were also used for data collection and analysed. Chapter Three will discuss the methodology in detail.

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.4.1. Mainstream schools

According to the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), mainstream schools are included with special schools and fall within the title of public schools (RSA, 1996b).

However, in the South African context, mainstream refers to schools catering for the majority of learners while excluding those with barriers to learning and disabilities.

1.10.1 Special schools

These are schools which, according to White Paper 6 of 2001, cater for learners excluded from mainstream schools. These schools cater for learners with physical and intellectual disabilities to learning (DoE, 2001).

1.10.2 IMD learners

Also referred to as mildly mentally retarded (MMR), these are learners who have problems with scholastic performance of an academic nature including reading, writing and arithmetic (SANASE, 2002).

1.10.3 Inclusive education

As a result of democracy in South Africa and according to the principles of inclusive education people are no longer marginalised due to their disabilities or other barriers to learning. The principle of inclusive education means that provision is now being made for all learners to be accommodated in the same classroom with adjustments to meet the diverse requirements of mixed group of learners. However, special schools still exist for learners who experience barriers to learning.

1.10.4 Outcomes-based education (OBE)

Outcomes-based education is an education system designed to accommodate the inclusion of all learners within the mainstream education system focusing on learner outcomes rather than educational inputs (Malan, 2000).

1.10.5 LSEN

Stands for learners with special educational needs and has replaced the term remedial education.

1.10.6 Adulthood

A phase in the lifecycle of human being that follows childhood. Adulthood will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter One: This chapter provides an overview of education in South Africa from a historical background to the current situation of special school education and the problem in question: the extent to which special-school learners are prepared for adulthood in their school curriculum.

Chapter Two: This chapter gives a review of the literature related to the study and provides the theoretical framework for the study, which consists of an explanation of relevant disability theories, curriculum theories and the role of transformative learning in preparing young people for adulthood. The study uses these theories as a framework for analysing the findings.

Chapter Three: This chapter provides a review of relevant methodology literature in relation to qualitative data collection, sampling, interviews and data analysis.

Chapter Four: It is in this chapter that the data is analysed. The raw data is transcribed, coded and interpreted according to the relevant theory. The result of the analysis led to educator and learner themes emerging. These themes are reflective of the educators' perceptions of the learners, highlighting the reasons for the learners attending a special school, together with the difficulties the educators experienced in trying to prepare the learners for adulthood. The learners' themes highlighted their experiences and interpretations of School X.

Chapter Five: In this chapter the findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature. The themes from Chapter Four are interpreted by analysing theories and concepts, disability models and the extent to which transformative learning was evident as a contribution to developing the learners' preparedness for adult life.

Chapter Six: This concluding chapter sums up the findings and its implications. Possible suggestions are made to make the curriculum more appropriate to the LSEN learner, and recommendations and suggestions for further research are given. The main conclusion reached is that learners from special schools do receive a raw deal when it comes to employment because of the stigmas attached to those schools. Also, many are not adequately prepared for adulthood. In light of this the following has been recommended for the learners to fit into society: the curriculum and the pace of the lessons should be adjusted to meet the needs of the learners, and teacher training and

school-support services need to be developed to keep learners informed about the latest trends in the workplace.

1.12 SUMMARY

Apartheid had a negative impact on South Africa and not least on its education system, with its problems of unequal standards and quality for different race groups. These problems contributed to the education crisis in SA, the effects of which are still felt today.

Special education was also adversely affected. Learners who required special support for learning were neglected and to a large extent excluded from educational planning. This was simply because it was thought that they did not fit in with the “normal” society. Learners with special needs of colour, governed by the principles of apartheid, were further marginalised.

The majority of South Africans are a product of the apartheid education system. Therefore, they still hold internalised views about themselves and social groups even though we are now living in a democratic society. This inevitably has an impact on their attitudes to people with disabilities. The implication of this history is that learners with special needs are still likely to be disadvantaged especially when it comes to finding jobs and socialising. This led to my interest in learners of special schools.

The subsequent chapters will help answer the research question – to what extent has the school prepared former special-school learners for adulthood?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Stake (1995) defines a literature review as a framework or the structure of the study. Cooper (1984) makes reference to it as the foundation of the study. Silverman (1993) argues that the literature being reviewed provides the researcher with the essential concepts needed to administer the project. However it may be defined, a literature review is an important component of research, providing a basis for and background to the study being undertaken. It includes purposively selected material on the research topic which guides and assists the researcher in answering the research questions. A review of the literature entails reading, analysing, interpreting and evaluating recognised scholarly material about the research topic (Stake, 1995).

This chapter begins with a definition of adulthood and a review of literature regarding the expectations of adult life. This is followed by a review of the general literature related to learners with special needs and an outline of the theoretical frameworks of disability, curriculum and transformative learning.

2.1 ADULTHOOD

There are many definitions of an adult and adulthood. These definitions vary from writer to writer, from culture to culture and even from individual to individual. This is because of the complex nature of being an adult.

Rogers (2002, p.39) for example has multiple terms to define an adult ranging from “a stage in the life cycle [to] a status, [to] a social subset [to] ideals and values”.

Generally adulthood is determined by the individual's chronological age according to legislation (Low & Low, 2009; Rogers, 2002). Upon reaching a certain age a person (adult) is afforded certain privileges and rights which are not available to persons regarded as children, for example, engaging in legal matters such as voting, obtaining a driver's licence and getting married. This is what Rogers (2002) refers to as autonomy - when the individual has reached a degree of maturity. In South Africa the legal age of an adult is 18 years.

Adulthood is characterised as being on the other end of the life cycle which begins with childhood (Rogers, 2002). Adults are expected to reach certain milestones at certain ages, to behave in a more rational manner than children and to deal with circumstances in a more mature way because of their life experiences (Rogers, 2002). Adulthood is also expected to "happen" in different phases, also determined by the chronological age of the individual (Cross, 1981). This means that people should accomplish certain goals in life at certain ages.

However, certain cultures, for example many groups in China, are not as concerned with a person's age but rather regard one as an adult by the socially prescribed roles and responsibilities assumed (Rogers, 2002).

What constitutes an adult is often determined by factors such as age and physical development without any consideration for the psychological aspects that determine adulthood. By way of one definition: adult learners have characteristics that are different from traditional school learners (Brookfield, 1995). In South Africa an adult is generally identified as an individual who is over the "chronological age of eighteen"

(Gravett, 2005, p.7). However, I find this slightly misleading as there are many individuals who are eighteen years or older and who are still attending formal school.

2.1.1 Transitions to adulthood for people with disabilities

Janus (2009) talks about the effects disability has on young people in terms of progress towards adulthood especially with regard to finding full-time employment and establishing family relationships. The results of his study demonstrated that adults with disabilities did not complete their transition to adulthood (Janus, 2009). Young people with disabilities, for instance, are more likely to be workers without homes of their own and who do not start their own families (Janus, 2009).

Questions that might be asked in relation to this issue include: does the education offered to disabled people help them to cope with the disability and are they able to overcome their disability? Are they being trained to face the challenges of adulthood? Does their education make them aware of the challenges of having a disability in adult life?

Wells (2003) looks at the factors related to the transition from adolescence to adulthood in the immediate post-high-school years. The outcomes of their study indicate that disability affects the individual's post-school activities (Wells, 2003). The socio-economic resources of the family are stretched in families where someone has a disability, thereby blocking the intergenerational transfer of socio-economic privileges, with consequences for adult transitions (Wells, 2003).

Such findings motivate the concern that special schools appear not to be preparing learners to deal with the conditions of and situations in adult life. After completing school, learners with special needs in particular appear not to have a support system to facilitate their onward transition.

Estrada-Hernández (2008) studied the relationship between the severity of disability and employment opportunities. The author revealed that the more severe the disability, the more disadvantaged one is and the less one's chances of finding employment, irrespective of the individual interest in job opportunities (Estrada-Hernández, 2008). Even if the individual is employed, he or she may not attain higher earnings.

This raises the question: how can disabled people overcome their disability and become better equipped to obtain employment?

Schultz, Liptak and Kirch (1998) discussed adolescents with disabilities who face unique challenges as they progress through the transitions to adulthood. Their article focuses on the collaboration between adolescents' families and other professionals to facilitate successful transitions to a more healthy, productive and satisfying adulthood (Schultz et al, 1998). This suggests that disabled adolescents need professional help to negotiate these transitions.

Nel, Van der Westhuizen and Uys (2007) pointed out that at one time employment was of no concern for learners with disabilities as they were considered of no use to the employment sector. The authors identified transition models based on successful American efforts to address a range of transition needs of youth with disabilities especially within the South African context which, if adhered to in accommodating

youth with disabilities, may be successful in terms of helping these youths find employment (Nel et al, 2007).

Rule and Modipa (2011) argue that many adults with disabilities in South Africa never had the chance to attend school or dropped out because of poverty or discrimination. Their study investigated the attitudes of disabled individuals towards education and found that individuals with disabilities generally had negative experiences of education as children (Rule & Modipa, 2011).

Van Niekerk (2007) also argues that disabled (LSEN) learners in South Africa are disadvantaged. In South Africa there is no curriculum for LSEN learners, although the South African curriculum at the time of this study was still under review. The personnel, teachers and therapists interviewed for this study found it difficult to prepare learners for appropriate employment after school. Even when educators were identified as having been supportive, the learners continued to experience challenges when they faced the search for employment.

Of the above seven studies looked at, only Van Niekerk (2007) looked at people with learning disabilities. The other studies concentrated on people with physical disabilities. This is indicative of the proportion of studies that focus on physical rather than learning disabilities.

The former learners of a special school make up the focus of my study. These learners were identified as intellectually disabled and therefore attended a particular school. A function of any school is to prepare learners for the future, for work, socialising and for

adulthood in general. The special schools which accommodate special-needs learners are no exception.

The preparation of LSEN learners for the future is reflected in, to a large extent the way the curriculum is offered at the school they attend, any learning support they receive in their transition from adolescence to adulthood, and the attitudes towards their learning disabilities and how these disabilities are addressed. The remainder of this chapter will review the literature around disability and relevant models of disability, curriculum theories and transformative learning since these concepts are all relevant to the research question.

2.2DISABILITY

People have always been compared with each other in relation to who can and who cannot perform certain tasks. People with permanent limitations (physical, mental or sensory) have been classified as different from people without such limitations. The overall blanket term used to describe them is *disability*. However, there are many other labels for these people and their abilities, such as “impairments”, “challenges”, “handicap”, or “special” (Leicester, 1999). These terms reinforce society’s assumptions about different people. Often, disabled people were regarded as a “tragedy” and in need of sympathy and charity. They were therefore pitied, given hand-outs and even cared for in separate institutions. Some cultures even regarded disabled people as being cursed or punished from a superior being for a sinful act which might have been committed in a previous life or by another family member (Haihambo & Lightfoot, 2010).

Within the many varied interpretations of and “explanations” for disabilities, some commonalities do exist. For example, disabilities or barriers are related to the individuals and instigated by society. Generalised views of disability may inadvertently lead to people, irrespective of their impairments or limitations, being stigmatised and categorised differently and generally excluded from society. Therefore disability is also a form of social oppression. This becomes evident in attitudinal barriers such as prejudices or stereotypes, and environmental and organisational barriers such as transport networks, employment opportunities and recreational facilities. These barriers are responsible for disabling and excluding certain people from sharing equal opportunities in society (Leicester, 1999; Mitchell, 1999; Rule & Modipa, 2011).

Within the South African context the apartheid system is a classic example of social oppression where people were also “disabled” because of colour, leading to increasing numbers of Black learners dropping out of school or not even enrolling (Rule & Modipa, 2011), adversely affecting their future and that of the country as a whole. This study then intended to find out if these generalisations made by society are included in the experiences the learners from one special school had in their school environment.

Leicester (1999), Mitchell (1999), and Rule and Modipa (2011) address disability as a form of inequality. Rule and Modipa (2011) feel the need to emancipate the disabled person by removing him or her from the bondage of the above-mentioned social ideologies. This can be achieved according to the aims that education sets out to achieve (Leicester, 1999). Leicester (1999) claims that education is for the purpose of community upliftment and therefore has to be made available to all people. This would mean that the disabled person, whom society views as less powerful and less privileged,

should be given an equal place and voice. The concern of this study is whether or not the school is preparing learners to be able to use their “voice” in the broader society. The study bears in mind that power and oppression are the building blocks for creating a passive and submissive sub-class of people, as noted by Mitchell (1999) and Leicester (1999). Such a hierarchy would begin to crumble once society is educated about the assumptions made about people who have barriers to learning. The extent to which the school prepares learners to deal with the negative ideologies of society about LSEN learners needed to be investigated during this study.

2.3 MODELS OF DISABILITY

People’s different perceptions and conceptions of disability, largely influenced by social expectations, determine the way disabled people are viewed and the provisions made for them (Leicester, 1999). Drawing on the literature on special education, common themes or focal points become evident in the works of various writers. Some writers refer to these themes as theories while others talk about the same issues but call them models. This study chooses to refer to these themes as models.

These models are used as frameworks or guides to help us understand disability and are meant to help us make judgments regarding the placement and treatment of the affected individuals in society (Leicester, 1999). There are a number of models of disability which have been defined over the past few years. The two most frequently mentioned are the medical and the social model of disability (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001).

2.3.1 The medical model of disability

The medical model identifies that there are challenges facing people and that certain people are unable to function in the same way others do (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). It also sees disability as a medical problem or a sickness within the person that requires ongoing professional help and care together with medication and ignores the circumstantial barriers of society that affect the impairment (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001).

The medical model further refers directly to the health condition, either physical or mental, of the individual. This model claims that disabled individuals, because of their unhealthy state, cannot participate on a par with those without disabilities (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). It is as though something is wrong with the individual and is of no concern to anyone but the individual, nor is it related to the way in which society is organised. Therefore, the affected individual, the health system and health professionals have the responsibility of rectifying the “problem”. This study aimed to determine whether this is the perception of the learners and those they are in contact with at the school, as this would affect the manner in which they prepare themselves for adulthood.

The medical model refers to disability with a negative connotation that entails suffering and some social disadvantage. Also, the language used to describe those identified with a disability usually indicate that they are different from or “less than” the rest of society, as reflected in terms such as “handicap”, “challenged”, “retarded”, “deformed” etc. Their impairments or differences are expected to be corrected by medical intervention.

The medical model seeks to make the affected individual “normal” by dealing with that which is limiting but it does not attempt to fix the environment that prevents full participation. Furthermore, the medical model makes no provision for the fact that people with a disability may actually be content with life and their disability, but are forced to receive remedial medical action because of the demands placed on them by society. An approach that simply tries to improve only the limitations of the individual suggests that the medical model does not consider the needs of the person but rather only what is wrong with them. This would therefore create low expectations of disabled people leading them to lose independence, choice and control over their own lives (Leicester, 1999).

The disabled community can be justified for its critique of the medical model for the way in which it views them as being sub-standard and therefore of little use in society, without individual independence and in dire need of health care (Guy, Clarke, Randall, Rouncefield. & Sommerville, 2004).

The learners I encounter at the special school are still victims of the medical models. They are referred to special schools after being assessed by a school psychologist. Medical and psychological evidence of a disability within the learner leads to them being placed at the school. Some of these learners are subsequently placed on medication to control their behaviour and their concentration. Not wanting to denigrate the benefits of medication, the implication of this strategy is that the aim is to “fix” the learner and not the environment.

2.3.2 The social model of disability

Developed in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the medical model, the social model argued that it is the social environment that is responsible for determining who is disabled and who is not (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001; Carson, 2004). This simply means that it is society that creates the unnecessary social barriers that exclude people from mainstream social activity designed only to accommodate able-bodied people and thereby disabling certain people.

According to the social model, it is not the individual's limitations that cause the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services to accommodate a diverse population (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001; Carson, 2004). This does not mean that persons with impairments are not exposed to difficulties but rather that they should not be disabled simply because they have impairments (Thomas, 2004). This feature of the social model becomes more evident in examples of stigmas, stereotypes, and labelling that are generated by society's insensitive perception of disabled people. These disabled people are regarded by society, for whatever reason, as different from the norm. They are prevented from taking an active role in many day-to-day events and activities as a result of barriers imposed on them by society itself. Such barriers include, among many others, inaccessible buildings and the lack of services like specialised transportation.

Contrary to the medical model, Rule & Modipa (2011) and Engelbrecht & Green (2001) argue that disability should be seen as being external to the individual as it is the result of the created environment and social factors and is no fault of the disabled individual.

Leicester (1999) applauded the social model which sees the person with a disability and not a “disabled person” and therefore looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for that person. When barriers are removed, people with disabilities can be independent and equal in society, with choices and control over their own lives.

However, Guy et al (2004) have seen the other side of the social model. They felt that it excluded the individual from the equation as it ignored the fact that people with disabilities do have difficulties, both physical and mental, and do experience physical and mental pain. Guy et al (2004) argue that removing the fact that the individual can experience some sort of challenge by modifying the environment does not do justice to the person with a disability. Oliver, cited in Rule and Modipa (2011), also criticised the social model for not doing justice to the reality of the situation. He claimed that the social model based its arguments on theory (theoretical models) and therefore made no contribution to improving the practical situation for disabled people.

While there is a need for greater synergy between the medical and social models for some people whose impairments require medical support, for the purpose of this study, I will be looking for evidence of a social model of disability when analysing the way in which the learners are supported in their transition to adulthood.

2.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Until recently, South African children who were regarded as disabled were treated differently and placed either in special schools or special classes within mainstream schools (Landsberg et al, 2005). However, the Human Rights Movement, and the notion of inclusive education contained in the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b), began

to change all of this. Inclusive education gave everybody an equal and fair chance to learn irrespective of their differences, physical or intellectual, in the light of democracy (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009). Hence the disabled community, which was an ignored sector, has now become an integral part of the schooling society. This research study aims to identify whether inclusivity makes provision for learners in society and in the workplace without discriminating against individuals who attended special schools, and how the school prepares these learners to deal with inclusion in, or exclusion from, society.

This study would ultimately determine which models of disability influence the school's programme and how the particular programmes, based on the models, prepare the learners for adulthood. Do special schools make the necessary provisions to accommodate the special learner – for example, specially adapted buildings and equipment and resources and even specially trained staff?

Special schools are attached with stigmas, stereotyped thinking and prejudices that adversely affect the people associated with special education (Rose, 2007). Also, by virtue of its name, the special school creates a notion of distinction meaning that certain groups of people cannot perform certain activities that others can. It has been argued that keeping people with disabilities together limits their horizons as lack of competition gives them no incentives to perform (Hutchinson & Tennyson, 1986).

However, it is also recognised that staying away from inclusive education and keeping special education alive has its merits. Learners identify with other people with disabilities. They realise that they are not alone and can support each other. Also they

are less likely to be ridiculed, humiliated, or criticised by their peers, which in turn provides a more relaxed atmosphere where learning may take place (Hutchinson & Tennyson, 1986).

2.5 CURRICULUM

Curriculum has been and will always be an integral part of the education system. Trying to define the term curriculum becomes problematic as it is a complex issue. The complexity comes about because of the way different people approach and interpret curriculum, which ultimately influences their understanding of it. Often the “definition” of curriculum which is used in its design is determined by one’s perception of what curriculum should be and may work theoretically but not necessarily in practice. However it is understood, there are always formal and informal components to it. Curriculum can be defined as being a plan, content, syllabus, subject matter and much more. The definition also includes what is taught. All of these approaches provide valuable insight into curriculum and are certainly complementary.

Curriculum is developed at a certain place and a certain time and what it is designed to achieve reflects the ideologies, political beliefs, values and affiliations of those who are in power (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Hoadley & Jansen, 2009), often ignoring the context it is meant for. Planners draw up curricula with hidden agendas and ulterior motives in mind which may not include the creation of equal opportunities for all learners. The objectives may be to divide and to marginalise, as was the case of the South African apartheid education curriculum (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). Stenhouse (1975), cited in Rose (2007), contradicts the apartheid-type education system and

believes that curriculum should have within it the challenge of meeting the needs of the learners and the society they function in.

Curriculum as part of the literature review will be discussed in the following sections: theoretical approaches to curriculum (behavioural and humanistic approaches); definitions of curriculum and its conceptual configuration as formal and informal curriculum, and the practiced curriculum, which includes the implicit curriculum (hidden and covert and the null curriculum).

2.5.1 Theoretical approaches to curriculum

The curriculum embraces the function of everybody involved in its development, design and implementation and what it sets out to achieve (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). But the philosophical approach adopted will inevitably influence the way the curriculum is designed. In education, the two most common approaches used are the behavioural and the humanistic approach.

2.5.1.1 Behaviourist approach

This is the oldest, most dominant and most prescriptive approach to curriculum. It regards learning in terms of what can be objectively observed and measured – broadly understood as behavioural change (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). It is a reflection of the established formal methods and designs of schooling, also termed the methodological approach (Owens, 1998).

Behavioural theorists focus on the influence the environment has on the learner (Smith, 1999). They believe that behaviour is managed by external stimuli. Therefore, according

to Tennant (1999) and Smith (1999), all behaviour can be explained without the need to consider unobservable internal mental events.

Theorists associated with this approach include Ivan Pavlov, Edward Thorndike and John Watson (Tennant, 1999). In the writings of Rogers (2002), Ornstein and Hunkins (2009), Smith (1999) and Tennant (1999) it becomes clear that these theorists assume that a learner is essentially passive and that external stimuli from the environment provoke responses directed towards achieving behavioural changes – this process is regarded as learning.

In special schools learners with low cognitive skills, experiencing intellectual problems and having difficulty with abstract information will benefit from a stimulus-and-response approach to learning. Also a creative, stimulating environment will assist their learning. The role of the teacher in such situations is important in selecting material, creating a conducive environment and then rewarding approved responses which will ultimately reinforce learning (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). This view is endorsed by Mercer and Pullen (1979) who relate the role of the teacher to the psychological concepts of stimulus and response and rewards and punishment to bring about a change in behaviour. According to behavioural theorists all of these are important factors contributing to learning. This study intends to find out if the curriculum that the learners were exposed to offered them appropriate external stimuli and if the teachers created conditions that were conducive to learning.

The behavioural approach, being methodological, will therefore have to include some sort of model or step-by-step plan for formulating curriculum. However, according to

Jarvis (2006), the idea of a linear system designed to achieve specific ends is not always credible since the way the end is reached and the quality of the end result are, to an extent, questionable. Jarvis (2006) adopted this view because the behaviourist approach makes no provision for learner participation but strictly emphasises the distinction between right and wrong, only rewarding personally or socially satisfying responses. Given that learning, according to the behaviourist, is dependent on external stimuli it stands to reason that society will determine the validity of those responses but in so doing leaves no room for individual, creative interpretation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

The behaviourist approach is limiting as it ignores the unobservable aspects that also contribute to the learning process - for example experience, spirituality and embodied learning (Tisdell, 2010; Merriam, 2004; Taylor, 2001). According to Owens (1998), this led to theorists like Frederick Skinner acknowledging a radical view of learning which includes unseen behaviour. For Owens (1998), intrinsic behaviours such as perceiving, thinking and dreaming are subject to the same qualities as overt behaviour and therefore must be included when considering the learning process. This is a paradigm shift from the thinking of the initial theorists. This study intends to find out to what extent the intrinsic aspects of learning are included in the curriculum for special schools, if at all they are included. I was therefore interested to see how the school's educators address intrinsic behaviours in the learning process.

The behaviourist theory is not flawless. It is based on results which emanated from tests on animals – rats, birds and dogs – which were then generalised to humans (Tennant, 1999; Owen, 1998). Human beings are rational and can learn not to respond to repeated

stimuli if these stimuli are of no significance to the individual. The behaviourist approach associates only the behaviours of individuals with mechanistic learning and leaves out other aspects of the individual, such as affect and spirituality. Learning is lifelong and behaviourism makes no provision for experience, thereby excluding creativity and individual interpretations (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

Passive components of learning, like observing others, that do not relate to behaviour are also excluded from the theory of behaviourism (Tennant, 1999).

2.5.1.2 Humanistic approach

Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) and Smith (1999) agree that the humanistic approach is more flexible than the scientific, technical, behaviourist approach. The humanistic approach concerns the measurable as well as the personal and social aspects of human growth within the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). In contrast to the behaviourist approach which views external stimuli as being responsible for inducing learning, humanists consider learning as the active interaction of the learners with the environment as well as the socio-psychological dynamics of classrooms and schools (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

Originating from ideas of the early 1900s that focused on the child in the learning process, the humanistic approach emphasises values (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Associated with theorists such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Malcolm Knowles, this approach recognises and respects the role of the learner as someone who is self-directed, self-actualised and an active participant in the learning process, who makes the decision to learn or not (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). This perspective has led

to changes in portraying the role of the teacher as the most knowledgeable to that of a facilitator: the teacher is no longer regarded as the most knowledgeable but merely the provider of the experiences needed for learning to take place (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). This approach considers not only the cognitive dimensions but the whole child in the learning process. Therefore the affective aspects also become important in the learning process (Smith, 1999).

Considering the characteristics of the LSEN learners, the humanistic theoretical approach to curriculum is my favoured choice. This approach gives the learner an identity with a contributing role in the learning process. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009), Rogers (2002) and Smith (1999) describe the humanistic theories as a converse approach to the conventional teaching and learning process. For these authors, the humanistic approach makes it possible to move away from regular methods of prescribed outcomes and objectives, methods that reflect a teacher-centred, top-down approach where the classroom situation is based on competition amongst learners. Humanists view learning as a more complex, humane process influenced by the context in which it occurs and including learner contributions that allow for challenges of teacher ideas (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Rogers, 2002; Smith, 1999). Maslow's ideas of self-concept, self-esteem and personal identities are essential factors in this perspective on learning (Smith, 1999). Mezirow's ideas in relation to transformative learning are also based on the same concepts and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Motivation for learning is seen as coming from within the individual and the desire to fulfil one's potential. This would meet the desired intention of School X which is to prepare learners to fit comfortably into society (School X brochure, undated).

2.5.2 Definitions of curriculum

Derived from the Latin word *currere* which means *to run a course* (Smith, 1996), curriculum is the guide prescribing what is to be taught, educating learners in a particular direction (Hoadley & Jansen, 2010). The functionality and ideas of how, why and what to teach has always intrigued educationalists. This is because the various definitions of curriculum emphasise its elusive, fragmented and confusing characteristics (Rose, 2007). However it may be defined, a curriculum is critical to the smooth running of the school and society and affects all who are involved with it (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

What then is curriculum? The answer to this question is subject to interpretation leading to multiple definitions. It depends on what is associated with learning and is often influenced by the context (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Hoadley & Jansen, 2009; Rose, 2007). By and large the way we define curriculum reflects our approach to it. It may be understood as content material, the plan in place to execute teaching and learning, what exactly goes on in the class, a product of a system to achieve desired goals or even a process involving various activities leading to the end result which is learning (Mikre, 2004). Curriculum is ultimately the framework for transmitting or imparting knowledge in one way or the other to prepare all learners for adulthood (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). It is however only recently, with the introduction of inclusive education, that a common curriculum in South Africa has been extended to all learners including those described as having difficulties in learning (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009)). The merits of the common curriculum will be discussed in subsequent chapters with the analysis of the data findings.

Kelly (1989) and Rose (2007) concur that curriculum relates to anything and everything that is involved in the educational system both formally, planned and unplanned. Learners learn important social and emotional lessons all the time from role models within the school and society (Kelly, 1989; Rose, 2007). The implication here is that learning encompasses a combination of formal, (explicit) and the informal (hidden covert and null) curricula.

2.5.2.1 The formal curriculum (explicit, overt, written)

Kelly (1977), cited in Mikre (2004), describes the formal official curriculum as the framework of the various learning experiences learners are supposed to engage in at school in order for learning to take place. A similar point of view held by Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) describes the formal curriculum as a process following logical steps in a particular order. It takes on many forms but basically it is instruction from some higher authority in the form of the official syllabus, documents, learning guides, teaching plans, framework and organisation of instruction covering various aspects for achieving goals (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). It is made up of various aspects formally designed to ensure the smooth running of the school.

Curriculum that focuses on the syllabus is really concerned with content and often the content that the planners wish to transmit. Content restricts learners to the prescribed information that they are required to acquire. It excludes the learner questioning the curriculum. It does not allow the learners to question the purpose of the curriculum and what it sets out to achieve. It also denies the learners the opportunity to question the manner of content implementations (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). The problem with such prescribed content is that other factors such as context, availability of resources,

efficiency of educators, interpretations and delivery of the content seem to have no place in the curriculum (Mikre, 2004).

This formal curriculum can be questioned and is often critiqued. Most often, curriculum choices reflect biases held by the politically powerful groups of society (Mikre, 2004). School curriculum is designed to replicate the ways of previous generations thereby maintaining the heritage of society (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009) and in unjust societies will reproduce inequalities especially the unequal distribution of power, privileging some and disadvantaging others.

Formal curriculum in South Africa makes no separate provision for LSEN learners (Van Niekerk, (2007). Apart from the inclusive education guidelines the main curriculum document is the CAPS document (DoE, 2010) which has to be adapted to suit the learners. This complicates the curriculum even further as it is left to the educators to decide what is relevant and what is not. Factors such as teacher personality, style, learner needs, available resources, teachers' perceptions and interpretations of the curriculum and the learner's perception of the curriculum may lead to an unavoidable difference between what is in the syllabus (what is prescribed) and what is actually taught and learnt in the classroom. This is because curriculum plans on the ground reflect what is drawn up in offices far from the actual context and ignore factors such as learner's ability, availability of resources, socio-economic conditions, etc. Certainly a one-size-fits-all curriculum cannot work. It follows that there will be no guarantees that the teachers will teach the curriculum in the exact way the planners intended it to be taught. The formal curriculum specifies things that for various reasons cannot be administered at special schools which are affected by behavioural factors such as low

concentration and motor co-ordination. Teachers too, having to focus on curriculum plans that are rigid, are less likely to contribute to the development of critical thinking among learners (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009).

Where there are different grades or standards, for example, the official curriculum reflects the content of those grades or standards (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). The challenge is what content to include and what to exclude for learners. Often what is left out of the formal curriculum is no less important than what is included. Therefore, when planning curriculum a point worth noting is what Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) argue – that content should be contextualised based on the needs of society with the interests of the learners as the main concern.

With this understanding of the formal curriculum, this research study aims to determine the following, with the assistance of the former learners and through the process of interviews: how and what aspects of the curriculum prepared them for adulthood; how they reacted to the formal curriculum that was offered to them – did they enjoy it, do they feel that it made a positive contribution to their lives, what aspects were relevant to them – and what are some of the improvements they feel are needed?

2.5.2.2 The informal curriculum

The informal curriculum includes the things that learners learn at school but which are not overtly included in the lesson planning and are not part of the official explicit curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009); for example, learning that takes place outside formal, content- based lessons, before and after school, and during the breaks. The unplanned informal curriculum deals with the socio-psychological interaction among

students and teachers, including their feelings, attitudes and behaviours in the learning process (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Informal curriculum includes that which actually happens in the school and is made up of the implicitly hidden, covert or null curriculum – the curriculum in practice (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

2.5.2.3 Actual curriculum in practice

While the formal curriculum comprises prescribed material as a guide to the educator, because of particular circumstances, many of these elements may not get taught. The curriculum in use is the actual curriculum that contributes to learning (the enacted or received curriculum). Teaching and learning involves the interaction between individuals with their own personalities, emotions and beliefs; it is not a rigid activity and it may not always occur in a mechanical manner, fulfilling the intentions of those who have planned it (Kelly, 1989). Therefore in trying to define curriculum we must not restrict our thinking to only that which is planned. We have to include what is actually received by the learners as this is an equally important, or in some instances a more important contributor to learning.

While Smith (1996) focuses on defining curriculum as an official plan, Hoadley and Jansen (2009), Griffen (1978), Kelly, (1989) and Stenhouse (1975, cited in Mikre, 2004) claim it to be all the learning activities which happen in the context of the school and teaching, whether planned or not. This may be very different from what is overtly included in the lesson or curriculum plans and incorporate the hidden elements of the education process not formally and officially documented. The actual or received curriculum is the reality of the learners' experiences and interaction in school (Hoadley

& Jansen, (2009); Griffen, (1978); Kelly, (1989) and Stenhouse, (1975), cited in Mikre, 2004).

In sum the curriculum as actually practiced involves the real activity of teaching and learning in the classroom, unplanned and informal, one that includes that which is not intended or stated but emerges anyway. It is broader than an official plan since it includes both the official and the implicit or hidden components of the curriculum. Curriculum in practice is important because it allows for certain kinds of knowledge and values which are not included in the formal plan to be taught. Therefore, all activities at school are important contributors to the actual learning process. The teachers' role as planners of the curriculum is highlighted, emphasising the fact that they are more than just transmitters of someone else's thoughts, values or even plans. Curriculum in practice shows that the teacher's actions, useful or not, are able to transform the curriculum plan within the actual process of teaching and learning.

Given that much learning happens from the curriculum in practice, this study seeks to find out what the learners picked up informally from what actually happened in the classroom and how that contributed to their learning experiences at school. Also, did this informal learning prepare them for the world of work and socialising?

2.5.2.4 The implicit curriculum

The hidden aspects of the school's curriculum are also contributors to the process of teaching and learning and must not be ignored. We must consider all learning that goes on in school, whether it is expressly planned and intended or an implicit by-product of planning or actual practice. Just like the formal curriculum, the implicit curriculum is

powerful in that, while not acknowledged, it will certainly be learned by the learner. The implicit curriculum is made up of the hidden, the covert and the null curriculum (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009).

2.5.2.5 Hidden curriculum

The actual curriculum has aspects not written down in a formal syllabus or document and these unwritten aspects can be referred to as the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is the learning that is implied and often overlooked in the planning of the formal curriculum. The hidden curriculum conveys messages of values, rules and power structures. Learners quickly learn about the unequal hierarchical structures within society and the acceptable ways of treating different people within this hierarchy – for example, how the managerial structures (principal, teachers, prefects etc.) of the school need to be respected (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). They also learn about the concepts of rules and the repercussions of disobeying rules (Christie, 1991). Kelly (1989) is of the opinion that, because of the way schools are structured and organised, crucial aspects of lifelong learning are implicitly conveyed to the learner – for example timeframes, lessons, deadlines etc. – which are not overtly included in the formal curriculum. The hidden curriculum therefore refers to the unplanned, unintentional messages that also constitute learning. Factors contributing to implicit learning include spoken and bodily language and the physical interaction between various role players and processes (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009).

Learning as part of the hidden curriculum may well happen without the participants being aware of it happening. Stereotyped social roles such as sexism, for example, are learnt in this manner. For instance teachers may make reference to “strong boys” to

assist with heavy manual tasks. The unintentional message sent out is that boys are stronger than girls. Therefore, mixed schools sometimes impact negatively on girls. The girls are made to believe that they are the weaker sex and are therefore incapable (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). These kinds of teaching and learning happen unintentionally and while seemingly innocent may have far-reaching, negative consequences.

The hidden curriculum also involves learning that occurs from unspoken practices at school. For example, the general classroom arrangement is one of division between teacher and learner. Where the teacher is at the front of the room this represents a symbol of authority, someone in control of the passive, subordinate learners (Christie, 1991). This may have happened unintentionally or out of convenience with the teacher trying to maintain order and discipline but also sends out specific messages to the learners about unquestionable authority. Persons who design the curriculum are inclined to be influenced by implicit attitudes and values and these are communicated to the learners intentionally, accidentally or even in a sinister way.

Within the special schools, just the title “special” has an implication. It tells the learners that they are different from learners in mainstream schools. Even though it is not formally said it is implied that LSEN learners are the under achievers, they get the menial jobs, they turn out to be the criminals in society, cannot become professionals, etc.

Formally planned curriculum makes no provision for the hidden curriculum. Formal teaching is in constant competition with the learners’ thinking and behaviours collectively designed with peers (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). This is because a gap exists

between the reality of teaching and learning, and official planning. The actual process of education is instrumental in students' learning behaviour patterns which might not necessarily be part of the official prescribed curriculum.

The hidden curriculum is not without critique. What is unintentionally and implicitly taught may not always be for the best. The notion of competition amongst learners, for instance, has its merits for getting learners involved but also teaches them that winning is better than working together, so the notion of striving to be the best creates a sense of division amongst learners (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

The hidden curriculum incorporates learning that most often teachers themselves are probably unaware of. Teachers and planners were probably implicitly exposed to experiences of school in a particular way. For example, the labelling of "girls' subjects and boys' subjects" and "special learners" inculcates certain expectations in the broader society of what are considered to be appropriate roles for men, women and social groups (Mikre, 2004).

A further problem with the hidden curriculum is its "out-datedness" (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009, p.54). Much of what is taught are ideas that are uncritically accepted and taken for granted and carried over from one generation to the next. These ideas carried over from past societies are seen as natural and consequently have deep and lasting influences on the way the learners come to see the world (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). Learners may come to believe certain ideologies without knowing why they are doing so – for example, sexism and racism.

This study seeks to find out if the former learners at School X were influenced by aspects of the hidden curriculum when planning for adulthood.

2.5.2.6 Covert curriculum – implicit but intended

Implicit learning that takes place at school may also be intended even though it is not mentioned or examined. This learning is not a result of information found in a syllabus document or textbook nor will it even be assessed and is called the covert curriculum (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). The covert curriculum includes ideas of teaching that are deliberate but implicitly put forward to the learners, for example being punctual, taking turns, standing in straight lines, putting up hands when answering teachers etc. From this the learners acquire values such as punctuality, cooperation and teamwork which ultimately prepare them to be respectful citizens (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009).

2.5.2.7 The null curriculum

The null curriculum is that which is not taught but contributes to learning (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Logistics makes it impossible to expose learners to all aspects of learning. This might imply that the topics which are left out are less important than others. Also, teachers may sometimes avoid situations where learners could become emotional or may try to avoid conflict resulting from religious and scientific differences, so topics like “creation versus evolution” may be deliberately excluded from the curriculum by teachers. The implicit and the null curriculum are important to recognise as they often expose the underlying assumptions and biases of specific planners of the various curricula and programmes (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

In the case of LSEN learners who may have an adapted or “watered-down” formal curriculum it will be interesting to see which aspects of the curriculum are deliberately omitted and which are included by teachers, and the implications of what is delivered to and received by the learners.

A key outcome of any curriculum is learning. In the case of LSEN learners who are being prepared for adulthood it is important to explore how transformative their learning is and how the former learners themselves anticipated the nature of their learning during this key transitional phase of their lives.

2.6 TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

Mezirow, a proponent of, and authority on transformative learning, states that “Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (cited in Taylor, 2010, p.5). Often recognised as the foundation of the adult learning processes and as a development of constructivism (Cranton, 1994), transformative learning has been described and further elaborated on by many writers. Baumgartner (2001) describes transformative learning as a process leading to a permanent or irreversible change. Cranton (1994, p.4) elaborates on this by stating that “transformative learning occurs when, through critical self-reflection, an individual revises old or develops new assumptions or ways of seeing the world”. These writers make it clear that transformative learning is learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner by building on former learning experiences. Reflection on these experiences significantly impacts on the learner’s subsequent experiences (Mezirow, 1990). The important point here is that learning happens from retrospection and the educator, as

facilitator, plays a role in fostering critical self-reflection for such learning to take place. Hence, transformative learning, as the word suggests, is about change: moving away from old ways of knowing to new ones.

Informational learning focuses on cognitive thinking and intellectual competence and goes on in the head, building on what is already known cognitively without any changes to the individual psyche; this type of learning is called cognitive constructivism (Dirkx, 2008). Transformative learning focuses on how we know rather than what we know; changing people because of their reflection on something new that they have learnt (Baumgartner, 2001).

New information is therefore linked to prior knowledge, leading to a change in what we believe, or causing us to discard the new information as irrelevant. This is what theorists like Vygotsky, Piaget, Dewey, and, Bruner termed the constructivist learning theory (Gravett, 2001; Fox, 2001; Cranton, 1994; Tusting & Barton, 2003). It can be seen from these writers' views that transformative learning is a higher-order way of thinking, associated with adults or adolescents rather than children. It certainly goes beyond content knowledge acquisition. Transformative learning involves critical learning when adults try to make meaning of their lives based on past experience (Smith, 2002). Therefore it is relevant to this study to see whether young adults were exposed to transformative learning, and if so whether it was positive or negative.

People actively construct or create their own subjective understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Taylor, 2010; Cranton, 1994; Gravett, 2001; Mezirow, 1990). When we encounter something

new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experiences. The experiences we encounter while growing up guide the interpretations and meanings of the experiences we have as adults. These childhood experiences are referred to as frames of references (things we go back to and consult) (Taylor, 2010). Frames of reference are “models of assumptions and expectations within which an individual’s tacit points of view originate” (Taylor, 2010, p.50) and either negatively or positively influence the way people think, what they believe and how they act.

Mezirow (1990) posits that adults have established meaning perspectives and frames of references which were instilled during childhood by family, friends, teachers and the society that we grew up in. Meaning perspectives are often acquired uncritically in the course of childhood through socialisation and acculturation, most frequently during significant experiences with teachers, parents and mentors (Taylor, 2010; Mezirow, 1990). They mirror the way our cultures and those responsible for our socialisation define various situations. Meaning perspectives are “also the distinct ways an individual interprets experiences” (Mezirow, 1990, p.2). These meaning perspectives support us by providing an explanation of the happenings in our daily lives but at the same time they are a reflection of our cultural and psychological assumptions (Mezirow, 1990).

As adults, when lived experiences are not in keeping with our expectations, we become critical of our frames of references and are forced to change our views, our thinking and our perspectives of these experiences based on our past experiences (Mezirow, 1990). This critical reflection is an important component of transformative learning. It relates to questioning the integrity of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experiences and occurs when we become conscious of our thoughts, feelings and actions, contradict

them and respond with some new action as a result of new learning. We become more focused on justifying what we know rather than just accepting it, which leads to a change in perspective. This change may come about in phases, starting with for example something that disorientates the individual, leading to critical reflection and a change in perspective. The resultant process of unlearning old knowledge and learning of new knowledge is what Mezirow (1990) calls perspective transformation. The new perspective is “more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative” (Mezirow, 1990, p.14). The former LSEN learners will have developed skills, attitudes and understandings that have been constructed at least in part as a result, of their schooling experiences. In order to make a success of their lives learners have to relook at old experiences and change them in the context of what they have learnt at school. This would include transformative learning experiences in relation to their sense of self, their abilities and how to deal with life situations. This study seeks to find out if this was the experience of learners in special School X, and the extent to which educators attempted to nurture this process.

Mezirow (1990) further explains how our expectations, determined by culture, influence the meaning we make of our experiences. Lack of knowledge leads to incorrect expectations, especially in the case of the LSEN learner who does not keep to our general expectations of what learners should be like and therefore is regarded as being different. What is needed is a “revision of meaning structures from experience that is addressed by the theory of perspective transformation” (Taylor, 2010, p.5). Such experiences of learners with disabilities would prove that these learners do learn and would assist us in changing our perspectives and adjusting our frames of reference.

In contrast to Mezirow who was concerned with individual transformation, Paulo Freire, cited in Taylor (2010), and concurring with Baumgartner (2001) and Taylor (2001), was concerned with social transformation of the oppressed as a collective. Freire called this the social emancipatory perspective and focused on the transformation of people's circumstances to improve society. This perspective fits in perfectly within the South African context. Learning programmes for the marginalised and oppressed in South Africa must be modelled around their experiences in order to bring about change in their lives. Just like Mezirow, Freire also sees critical reflection as central to transformation in context. Freire believes that the more critically aware learners become of their experiences, the more they are able to learn and hence transform society. It becomes important for learners who want to change society to take their previous experiences into consideration, critically evaluate them and construct new meaning (Taylor, 2010). This, of course, as stated in Chapter One, was the purpose of education in the apartheid era. The extent to which such learning is nurtured in the special school curriculum must be tested.

Learning which is considered as only a cognitive process is now being challenged in recognition, as previously stated, of other factors such as embodied learning (emotions and spirituality) involved in the way of knowing (Tisdell, 2010; Merriam, 2004; Taylor, 2010). There is now acceptance of the fact that we can learn "through" our bodies just like preschool children who cannot read or write learn through their bodies in sand, water and climbing equipment. During a stressful or fearful experience our nervous system is stimulated and this affects our physical responses. For example, our heart rate increases, we perspire and our breathing becomes faster. The fact that we get goose bumps when we think of something is indicative of a close connection between our

minds and bodies (Tisdell, 2010). This would support the theory of transformative learning because central to the view of transformation is the change in how people make meaning, not just a change in behaviour or acquired knowledge. Taylor (2010) was critical of the views of Mezirow, a proponent and authority on transformative learning. Taylor (2010) feels that Mezirow over-emphasised the role of critical reflection that led to transformative learning and overlooked the implicit aspects of transformation such as thoughts and actions. The appreciation of the role of relationships, personal and contextual influences and holistic ways of knowing are also ignored, according to Taylor (2010). If these aspects of learning are recognised then learners who have intellectual problems and who would have been perceived as not being able to learn would now be included in the broader understanding of learning as a humanistic and holistic endeavour (Taylor, 2010).

Engaging with the affective, transformative learning process also provides an opportunity for interaction with those unconscious aspects of ourselves expressed through various images, feelings and behaviours within the learning setting. Teachers need to actively engage with the feelings of the learners together with reasoning when administering transformative learning (Taylor, 2010).

Cranton (1994) and Merriam (2004) also state that learning is a multifaceted phenomenon incorporating a range of features within the human existence. Together with the cognitive process, learning is made up of experiences, emotions, spirituality and relationships. These embodied factors are critically important to adult learning as they can impact both positively and negatively on the way adults learn. These factors

are also crucial considerations when dealing with learning in individuals who have difficulties with cognitive constructivism.

2.7 HOW IS TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY RELEVANT TO MY FOCUS OF STUDY?

My focus of study looks at how special schools prepare learners for adulthood. As stated earlier, transformative learning is a type of andragogy pertinent to adult learners because it deals with a more mature manner of learning and is influenced by life experiences (Smith, 2002; Merriam, 2004). How adults change the way they interpret their world is strongly influenced by “habits of expectations” (Mezirow, 1990 p.1). It is the starting point for adult learning for, as Merriam (2005, p.3) states, “change is fundamental to adult life”. Transformative learning allows individuals to think for themselves and be emancipated from the unquestioned acceptance of knowledge gained through experience and influenced by social settings, and hence is useful for my study. In order for learners to prepare for adulthood specific kinds of learning are necessary. Often learners have to “unlearn” certain ideologies in order to learn new knowledge to guide their future. What they are actually doing is adjusting their frames of reference to cater for the transformation of their perspectives. This is particularly relevant to young adults who are moving from an experience of a special school which inculcates certain ideologies and belief systems about self-worth and societal expectations of a person.

In the light of transformative learning the question to be answered from the research is: how is the special school system providing learners with relevant learning experiences that enable them to use prior experiences to inform new interpretations that will guide their future actions as adults? This is crucial as according to Smith (2001) the way

adults learn is different from children. Therefore schooling experiences ought to be more challenging for adolescents than for children.

Society sets frames of references that people are expected to follow or achieve. Mezirow referred to these as “meaning schemes” (Mezirow, 1990, p.2). Often society designs its standards for mainstream learners with no consideration for learners who have barriers to learning. The implicit expectations of the schooling system are to provide opportunities for a better life for all learners but is this true for LSEN learners?

Transformational learning comes about as a result of relationships between different people. For learners, especially at special schools, it is often most importantly the relationship between learner and teacher. This relationship has to be one of trust and the teacher has to create the right conditions for transformative learning to take place. Differential power dynamics in the classroom also require sensitivity. Students who see the teacher as an authority figure may be unable or unwilling to question their teacher’s values or their own values.

In adulthood we develop a more critical worldview as we seek ways to better understand our world. Critical thinking would involve learning how to negotiate and act upon our own purpose, values, feelings and meaning rather than cling to those we have uncritically assimilated (Taylor, 2010). This study aims to answer the questions: Is the special school system making provision for critical thinking? Is there place for critical thinking in the curriculum which is designed to assist the learners in adult life?

In a changing country like South Africa, a new democracy with its history of apartheid, special schools should be preparing their learners for change. I wish to investigate

whether special schools are encouraging transformative learning or whether the learner goes through transformative learning experiences (negative or positive) irrespective of whether the school has taught the learner to think critically. Do the teachers develop critical thinking? Are they encouraging and acknowledging other ways of learning, for example the emotional aspects, relationships, etc?

2.8 CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning are an integral part of human development and this becomes obvious when we examine transitions and learning events in our lives. However, the relationship between teaching and learning should not be generalised as the phenomenon is unique to the learner and depends on the learner's particular needs and interests. Transformative learning helps to explain how adults change the way they interpret their world. This involves learning which, according to Mezirow (cited in Taylor, 2010), is concerned with how to interpret our own feelings and meanings rather than those of others. As my study focuses on the critical, complex stage of life – the change from childhood to adulthood – the use of transformative learning as a guide would add value to my study.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the notion of adulthood and different models of disability that may be represented in different ways through the curriculum – formal, covert and hidden – which in turn are likely to influence the meaning perspectives that special needs learners generate as a result of their schooling. The next chapter will describe in detail the methodology.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A research design is basically the plan of the research project. It explains how the information was collated, analysed and organised to reach what Merriam (1988) describes as the final preferred result. It also includes the philosophical perspective of the research – for instance positivist, interpretive or emancipatory. This study employs the interpretive paradigm, using qualitative data collection methods. However, the design must have some sort of direction and must be guided by the research questions.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research questions are:

1. To what extent did the special school prepare the learners for adulthood?
 - 1.1. What were the learning experiences of the learners at school?
 - 1.2. How did the school and the curriculum prepare learners for the world of work and socialising?
2. How can the school curriculum be improved for better preparation for work and adult living?

From these questions it becomes obvious that the research is concerned with exploring, describing and interpreting former learners' experiences within a specific context and as such a qualitative study is relevant (Merriam, 1998; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Cohen,

Manion and Morrison (2011) further explain qualitative research as aiming to understand human behaviour as it presents itself within a natural setting, “making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definition of the situation” (Cohen et al, 2011, p.537). Qualitative research has no bearing on scientific facts or measurable data but allows the researcher to interpret behaviour, drawing on thick, detailed descriptions of the participants’ interpretations and understanding and the meaning of their actions within a particular context (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Stake, 1995). The researcher is required to investigate behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, values and the interaction between the participants. This is what makes the study qualitative (based on subjective interpretations) and not quantitative (relying heavily on objective, factual information). The information gathered is based on an inductive analysis of the personal experiences of the participants and their opinions, and is informed by the context in which these experiences occurred (Mouton, 2001). Babbie and Mouton (2001, p.271) suggest that the researcher “walk[s] in the subject’s shoes” to create first-hand experiences that guide the interpretation, and understanding of the context, of the participants’ experiences. Cohen et al (2011, p.290) talk about the researcher finding out “what it’s like to be in the real situation”.

Being of a qualitative nature this study intends to take an interpretive approach (Yin, 2005) and to “establish cause and effect (how and why)” (Cohen et al, 2011, p.289) by gaining insight into the former learners’ experiences and interpretation of their education within a specific context, which is School X. These findings are compared to the interpretations, attitudes and experiences of selected teachers who were contracted to teach a certain curriculum to the learners, as well as policy documents which outline the curriculum and purposes of the school. The intentions of this research are, as

proposed by Sherman and Webb (1990), and Coolican (1999), to generate meaning derived from the subjective interpretations of the participants' experiences.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To obtain the desired data the researcher has to work within a certain methodology. The methodological approach I have chosen is a “descriptive case study providing narrative accounts” (Cohen et al, 2011, p.290). I intend to illustrate a phenomenon as it is reported to have happened in the actual school situation (Yin, 2003). This approach is appropriate because according to Yin (1994), as cited in Babbie & Mouton (2001, p.280) a case study is “an intensive investigation of a single unit”. By another definition a case study is a detailed and organised inquiry or investigation of a particular instance within a context with the purpose of generating knowledge (Rule & John, 2011). Since the case, as identified by Yin (1993) is the “phenomenon of interest” (p.12) or “unit of analysis” (p.10), in this study the case is the curriculum and its impact on learners and their school learning experiences in the context of school X. The curriculum is interpreted as process (enacted) and content, particularly in relation to the hidden curriculum and with strong focus on curriculum as process. The primary source of data regarding the curriculum is the learners' own experiences, triangulated by interview data from three teachers in school X.

This methodology provides the framework within which the understanding of the experiences of the former learners of a special school was studied. Yin (2003) also states that case studies allow in-depth, first-hand understanding of a case. Rule and John (2011), Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, cited in Cohen, 2011), and Baxter and Jack (2008) also confirm that a case study is a detailed and organised inquiry or investigation

of a particular instance within a context with the purpose of generating knowledge through a thick description of the case as seen through what Baxter and Jack (2008, p.544) call “a variety of lenses which allow for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood”. A case study provides examples of people who are actively involved in real-life situations and thereby generates understandings that are not made up of just abstract theories and principles but rather are built on practicalities derived from multiple sources of evidence (Cohen et al, 2011). Readers should thereby be able to understand how ideas and abstract principles blend together. This particular research is not just about numbers and figures. It is about points of view, feelings, descriptions and documentation. A case-study approach is, therefore, appropriate as it can generate an in-depth understanding of a situation that does not warrant a random numerical study. Furthermore, case studies tend to explore a problem within a limited, focused setting that may shed light on other similar cases drawing on both subjective and objective data (Lanthier, 2002).

The above characteristics of a case study make it best suited for my research project. I engaged in an empirical inquiry of the former learners’ experiences of the school curriculum as enacted. I strived to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation, to capture a close-up reality and thick description of participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation. This approach involved looking at a phenomenon in its real-life context.

The results of a case study are seldom presented quantitatively but most often employ words and pictures rather than facts and numbers (Cohen et al, 2011; Rule & John, 2011; Stake, 1995). Cohen et al (2011, p.293) refer to qualitative data being interpreted

as “seeing the situation through the eyes of the participants”. The resulting qualitative data provides an insider view, beginning with the participants’ responses within the real settings and followed by the researcher’s interpretation (Mouton, 2001; Stake, 1995). This view reflects the purpose of my research which is to gain insider perspectives of experiences the former learners had at the special school. However, it is important to acknowledge that the way in which the former learners understand and interpret their experiences is a subjective reflection and ultimately influences my interpretation of the findings. Similarly, with interpretation the possibility of researcher bias exists. Therefore the researcher must try to remain as neutral as possible (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and I provide a section on reflexivity which recognises my particular role in the data collection and analysis.

In summary, the purpose of a case study is to portray, analyse and most importantly interpret the uniqueness of real situations (Stake, 1995) with the intention of gaining an in-depth, detailed insider view and understanding of “participants’ lives, experiences and thoughts about and feelings for a situation” (Cohen et al, 2011, p.290).

3.4 SAMPLING

I made use of non-probability, information-oriented, purposive sampling, rather than random sampling. The participants making up the sample to be interviewed were selectively chosen for the purpose of, according to Durrheim and Terreblanche (1999), producing specific information about the case study. The number of interviewees was chosen to provide rich information to give depth to my study. The interviewees included three selected educators and 20 former learners. These participants were selected because of their willingness to be interviewed, they were known to me and known to be

forthcoming, and the learners were those who had recently finished school with memories that were still fresh in their heads. This is in keeping with what Cohen et al (2011, p.156) state about “Hand picking...a sample that is satisfactory to [one’s] specific needs” as well as with Durrheim and Terreblanche’s (1999) view that samples should be appropriately represented. In the final event, only 17 former learners (10 males and 7 females) agreed to be interviewed.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is an important aspect of any type of research. Inaccurate data collection can impact on the results of a study and ultimately lead to invalid results. A characteristic of the case study, and one which I used, is to rely on multiple sources of information and methods to provide as complete a picture as possible (Cohen et al, 2011; Rule & John, 2011; Stake, 1995). This is necessary if the researcher wishes to add credibility to the collated data (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2005). The sources of my data therefore included former learners and educators as well as field notes taken during the interviewing process. In addition publically available documents such as school policy documents, syllabi, the South African Schools Act, and the CAPS document were, where relevant, used as a comparative reference when analysing interview responses. The interview data were analysed together to produce what Baxter and Jack (2008, p.554) refer to as “a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied”. Throughout the research study great care was taken to ensure that the research question, the purpose of the study and the methods were at all times connected.

3.5.1 Interviewing

A feasible way of obtaining information regarding the research questions is first-hand information from the participants in the form of interviews. Hatch (2002) states that interviews are one of the ways of revealing the meaning that participants attach to their experiences. Interviews can range from being highly structured to being completely unstructured, depending on what is required of the interview (Merriam, 1998). There are a number of ways that one can administer an interview, with each having its individual advantages, disadvantages and ethical considerations. However, interviews appear to be one of the most commonly used instruments within qualitative research for the collection of data. Definitions of the interview include conversation involving an exchange of ideas between two people (Cohen et al, 2011). These conversations are a purposive interaction between the researcher and the participant or participants, exposing different perspectives or points of view on topics of common interest (Kvale, 1996). While relaxed, this interaction is not, however, a casual conversation. It has to be structured so that it is possible for the researcher to extract the information the researcher wants (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith (2005, p.50) “[the] individual’s perspective is an important part of the fabric of society”.

With regard to data collection, Merriam (1998) argues that in case studies the most used source of data is interviews. A possible reason for this is the flexible nature of obtaining data which could arise from multisensory sources, verbal and non-verbal, for example gestures, sighs etc. The interview also creates a relaxed atmosphere, setting the interviewee at ease and establishing a good rapport between interviewer and

interviewee, especially if administered at a place convenient to the participants. Since interviews are of an interactive nature, participants may be interviewed several times to follow up on a particular issue, clarify concepts or check the reliability of the data (Valenzuela, 2000). Interviews also contribute to the narrative aspect of data collection which forms an important component of case studies. From these narratives come lived experiences to be analysed and which may be used to answer the research questions. Interviews give participants the chance to challenge the agenda set by the researcher and raise new issues by asking the researcher questions (Cohen et al, 2011). Open-ended interviews are a powerful means of obtaining information and gaining insight when the conversation is initiated by the interviewer (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smith, 2005). Such questions tend to have less structure but are still focused on obtaining information that is relevant to the research topic.

On the other hand, interviews offer challenges in that they are time-consuming, open to researcher bias, inconvenient, sometimes lack anonymity and at the worst even go against ethical standards (Cohen et al, 2011).

The interview method used in this study was open-ended and semi-structured making it possible for the researcher to probe for further clarification at any time during the interview process. Working qualitatively and in an interpretative paradigm, together with interpretive methodology, individual interviews were conducted.

The interviews were tape recorded in English, transcribed verbatim and hence served as the main source of data for analysis purposes.

3.5.2 Field notes

Throughout the interviews the researcher made notes of observations that could not be tape recorded, for example hand and eye gestures, sighs, pauses, non-verbal activity, etc. Some of the notes resulted from the researcher's interpretations of what was observed. According to Merriam (1998) these notes may be useful later on to support the recorded data during transcriptions. Babbie and Mouton (2001) approve of such note-making as they agree that it enhances the validity and reliability of qualitative research especially for the purpose of triangulation.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

As case studies form part of qualitative research the results should not be represented as a percentage, subject to statistical analysis or projected to the larger population. This is because the participants do not make up a randomly selected representative sample. The sample is relatively small but will generate lots of information (Cohen et al, 2011).

Data analysis is, however, an organised process. It involves a detailed analysis and interpretation of the raw data for the purpose of generating information which can then be made available to the public (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). The participants' responses were thematically coded and then analysed to check for coherence, overlaps, similarities and differences, and this afforded the researcher the opportunity to draw inferences and conclusions which is what Merriam (1998) describes as making sense of the data. The themes were then explored in relation to the theoretical framework as a further layer of analysis.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Due to their qualitative nature, case studies are likely to be more convincing and accurate if the results are based on several different sources of information. This is known as the process of triangulation (Cohen et al, 2011; Rule & John, 2011; Stake, 1995; Patton, 1990). The researcher achieved this by using a range of sources available which included: literature; interviews; notes taken during the interviews and tape-recorded versions of participants' understanding and interpretations of their experiences. In addition, where relevant, the interview responses were compared to publically available documents. The use of multiple sources for the purpose of triangulation increases the credibility of the findings and enhances the authenticity of the results (Cohen et al, 2011; Rule & John 2011; Stake, 1995; Patton, 1990).

Included in the multiple methods were cross-checks with the participants during the interviews to ensure that correct information went in to the transcript, as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2001). This was to reduce the possibility of researcher bias which is known to affect the reliability of findings. For this reason Babbie and Mouton (2001), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) stress the importance of researcher neutrality throughout the entire research process. To ensure neutrality the researcher at all times reviewed the manner in which data were collected and constantly revisited his approach to ensure it did not influence the responses. This together with triangulated data contributed to the credibility of the findings.

3.8 LIMITATIONS

Case studies in general have one major limitation in that because of their subjective nature their findings cannot be generalised (Cohen et al, 2011; Rule & John, 2011;

Stake, 1995). Babbie and Mouton (2001) argue that much criticism has been hurled at case studies because of the inclination to extend the findings of a single case to a larger context. However, to counter such criticism, Babbie and Mouton (2001) propose the use of multiple sources in the form of triangulation that would lead to the data being valid and reliable. Regardless of the kind of data involved, data collection in a qualitative study takes a great deal of time and this can lead to interviewer fatigue. The analysis of the data is also consuming.

Bias and positionality of the researcher are likely to influence the case and it is therefore important that the researcher be aware of his or her subjectivity in the study and how the researcher's position impacts on the research (Hodkinson, 2001; Goodwin, 2002). My study had specific limitations. The fact that I am known to the participants influenced the research. Some learners appeared to respond in a way that they thought would please me especially when it came to comments related to the subject that I teach. The educators too may have tried to use the interviews as an opportunity to expose their discontent with the institution. In order to counter these limitations I chose to examine different views and make a comparison of the triangulated data to ensure valid and reliable interpretations in the results.

Trying to round up the past learners and obtaining parental consent also added to the limitations. Of the proposed 20 learner interviews I managed to get only 17 done. One of the three learners kept on making excuses and I got the feeling that she just wanted to avoid the interview process. The other two girls, after initially agreeing to participate, refused on the grounds that they felt that the school didn't offer them much especially in terms of employment and were convinced that my research too would be of no value to

them. Nevertheless, the 17 learner interviews and three educator interviews that were conducted provided important points of comparison which will be presented thematically in Chapter Four.

3.9 ETHICS

Data collection methods must observe ethical principles of research including respecting the rights of the participants. The researcher must respect the rights and values of the research subjects who are potentially threatened by the research (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). This was central to the researcher's decision when choosing participants and drawing up the findings. The researcher must ensure that there is a fair amount of benefit to him- or herself and society without impacting negatively on the participants (Bassey, 1999). Ethical issues arise out of the context in which the research takes place and have to be interpreted and dealt with accordingly. Procedural ethics have to be followed as well and have to abide with ethical principles and practices. For example informed consent was one of the principles followed in the interviewing process. This was to ensure that the study did not impact on the participants, their families or the school in a negative way.

Due to the nature of the study and the former learners' status, I required informed consent for their participation in the research project. This was obtained in writing from each participant together with a covering letter to ensure that they understood the nature and the purpose of the research. I assured them of their confidentiality and the removal of any identifying information from the study. Identities have therefore been reported as "Teacher 1, 2, 3" and "Learner 1, 2, 3" etc. The participants were also informed that they were not compelled to participate and were free to withdraw if they wished – an

aspect which, as demonstrated above, three former learners took advantage of. During the interviews I constantly reviewed the data with the participants ensuring that there was no misrepresentation of data, as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2001). This also helped avoid any inaccuracies with the recording of information. I also told the participants that they were more than welcome to look at the transcripts and a copy of the dissertation on completion. In sum, I adhered to what Cohen et al (2011), and Rule and John (2011) talk about in terms of protecting the dignity of the participants.

In this case, because of the sensitivity of the subject and need to keep the school anonymous, I did not interview people on school premises and did not use any confidential documentation held by the school. At the end of the study all transcripts, recordings and other material that might lead to any identification were destroyed.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while the chief disadvantage of case studies is that the results obtained may not be generalised to others and whilst we learn a lot about one case, that which we learn might not apply to the larger population, they still do have many significant advantages. One advantage of the case study is that it provides a great amount of description and detail. This volume of detail suggests that a particular case study can generate future research questions to pursue in other, similar studies. A case study is also a good source of ideas about behaviour, opportunity for innovation, a method to study rare phenomena and a method to challenge theoretical assumptions and hence fits in well with educational research.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Considering the current unemployment situation in South Africa and the efforts made by schools and special schools in particular to equip learners with employment skills, the purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which School X prepared its learners for adulthood in terms of their experiences at school. Furthermore the study aimed to determine the educators' roles in using the resources available to them to prepare learners for work and post-school socialisation. It was decided that the most appropriate method of determining such information would be by interviewing teachers and former learners who are and were associated with School X respectively in order to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent did the special school prepare the learners for adulthood?
 - 1.1. What were the learning experiences of the learners at school?
 - 1.2. How did the school and the curriculum prepare learners for the world of work and socialising?
2. How can the school curriculum be improved for better preparation for work and adult living?

4.2 PROCESSING AND PRESENTING THE DATA

This chapter outlines and discusses in detail the emergent themes which evolved out of the study as determined by the researcher. It begins with data collected from the

educators followed by data collected from former learners. The focus was on learners' experiences. However, three teachers provided information for triangulation and comparison purposes. This chapter presents the findings that arose from interviews with educators and former learners of School X.

The raw data for this research was generated from the transcriptions of face-to-face interviews.

During the interview process the responses of the participants were tape-recorded and all non- verbal body language such as hand gestures, sighs, long pauses, tonal variations and facial expressions were noted. After the interviews, the tape-recorded narratives were transcribed and their quality considered. The transcribed data were read and re-read in order for the researcher to become familiar with it. Data that was irrelevant was excluded from the analysis process and only data pertinent to the case was coded and categorised according to consistencies and overlaps, giving rise to the emergent themes. Before presenting the findings thematically it is pertinent to summarise the profiles of the participants (educators and learners) for background information. These profiles are presented below in table form.

4.3 EDUCATOR PROFILE SUMMARY – Table 1

Teacher	Male / Female	Teaching Experience	Special Education Training	Subjects Taught
T1	F	15 years	Yes	Arts and Culture English Mathematics Reading
T2	F	5 years	No	English Life Orientation Arts and Culture
T3	M	11 years	No	Woodwork

4.4 LEARNER PROFILE SUMMARY – Table 2

Learner	Male / Female	Technical Subject	Current Job	Living at Home
L1	F	Hairdressing	Unemployed	Yes
L2	M	Metalwork	Bakery Assistant	Yes
L3	M	Metalwork	Unemployed	Yes
L4	M	Motor Vehicle Repairs	Assistant Mechanic	Yes
L5	M	Metalwork	Unemployed	Yes
L6	M	Metalwork	Unemployed	Yes
L7	M	Metalwork	Maintenance work at the hospital	Yes
L8	F	Hairdressing	Unemployed	Yes
L9	M	Motor Vehicle Repairs	Unemployed	Yes
L10	M	Motor Vehicle Repairs	Unemployed	Yes
L11	F	Cooking	Unemployed	Yes
L12	M	Motor Vehicle Repairs	Unemployed	Yes
L13	M	Woodwork	Unemployed	Yes
L14	F	Cooking	Unemployed	Yes
L15	F	Needlework	Shop Assistant	Yes
L16	F	Needlework	Unemployed	Yes
L17	F	Needlework	Unemployed	Yes

The participants in the interviews were three educators and 17 former learners. A total of 20 learners had been identified but three withdrew from the study. Of the three educators, two were from the school's academic centre and one was from the technical centre. All three had been formally trained to teach mainstream learners. However, only T1 had additional formal training in special education. Teaching experience at a special school ranged from five to fifteen years.

All the former learners interviewed were at the school a year ago. They were between 18 and 22 years old and had attended the school for the entire four-year programme. All

of them resided in Pietermaritzburg. Seven were female and ten were male. Three males and one female were employed. Of the males, only one was employed in the technical field he followed at school. All the participants resided with their parents.

4.5 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATORS' THEMES

When working with learners with special needs, educators are expected to deal with the learning, emotional, physical and behavioural difficulties of these learners. The educators therefore have to ensure that their teaching strategies are modified to meet such learner needs. For the purpose of the research and within the school in question these strategies are reflected by the educators' responses to the interview questions which led to the following themes evolving – *the educators' analysis of the learners, the functions of educators teaching at School X and the accommodation of learners at special school* .

4.5.1 Educators' analysis of the learners

Teaching and learning involve the interaction of individuals. This interaction includes the complex process of curriculum delivery. The actual curriculum delivered is often linked to the educator's interpretation of how and what is to be delivered. This interpretation may be influenced by the educator's perspectives of the intended audience and the educator's previous experiences which inform the delivery of the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Therefore, the educator participants' analysis of the learners plays a vital role in what and how the learners learn, and in influencing the learning experiences the learners have at school. This in turn will ultimately influence how prepared the learners are for adulthood when they leave school.

The educators' responses to how they viewed the learners are categorised under the following sub-themes: scholastic performance, job capabilities, social skills, behavioural problems, and self-esteem and environmental issues.

4.5.1.1 Scholastic performance

All educators interviewed viewed the learners at the special school as being different from mainstream learners in terms of their scholastic performance. They perceived the learners as having limited learning capabilities and being in need of specialised education to take them into adulthood. For example T1 said:

These learners also lack the basic reading skills and also comprehension skills. As I said language is also a problem for them. Our children are frustrated that they cannot cope with the work. Their learning challenges are obviously different from the mainstream learner, that's why they come to our school. Simply they cannot make it in the mainstream schools well academically at least...and that's the difference. Their intelligence level is low. They battle with simple tasks. As I mentioned language, comprehension and reading skills...are the reasons [pause] contribut[ing] to this.

T2 echoed the same sentiments:

Due to the uniqueness of their learning problems, behavioural problems, they were put into our school. They were actually pulled out of the mainstream schools. This means that they need special educational attention. They are not the same that is why they are put in special schools.

T3 felt the same way as well and mentioned:

Well they come here because they can't make it in the mainstream schools... They cannot comprehend abstract concepts. These learners are very different from the mainstream learners. I taught woodwork in a mainstream school. Hey! They cannot be compared with mainstream learners. Because of their behaviour and their intellectual problems their challenges are different from the mainstream learners.

The educators also claimed to have encountered learners with short attention span. "They have an attention deficit" (T1); "They are not fast learners ...They cannot learn for a long time (T2); "They cannot concentrate and they get easily bored" (T3).

This feature contributes to making the teaching and learning process very difficult or even impossible, drastically affecting the scholastic performance of the learners. The educators also mentioned how easily the learners get distracted: "The slightest noise can distract them sending them off in a tangent" (T1); "Even if someone walks past the classroom it disturbs them and they [referring to the person walking past] can spoil the lesson" (T2). T3 mentioned that "These learners cannot see a task through because they just can't concentrate for long periods of time." He also said that "They have a short attention span".

To overcome these intellectual difficulties the educators made use of various pedagogical strategies. Their adaptation of the curriculum was rationalised by their perception of the learners' ability which is evident by comments such as:

In every lesson I have to add on information to make the lesson exciting otherwise they are not interested and won't pay attention, also I have to add on to reach their level. (T1)

I have to make changes [to the curriculum] because of the different abilities in the classroom. I have to follow the same topics in the curriculum [prescribed CAPS document] but have to water it down and I vary the delivery process and the assessments. Well to meet the needs of the learners... I look at other resources that the learners will cope with. (T2)

However, T3 felt that the technical subjects cannot be simplified: "Their main problem is language. In a trade there are many terms that cannot be explained in IsiZulu."

4.5.1.2 Job capabilities

The educators believed that the subjects they were teaching were relevant to the learners in preparation for leaving school:

Once again I feel the English has relevance for the future because of the themes chosen. Mathematics will help with the practical things like if you are building a house, measurement skills are required. (T1)

Yes when they go out of school they are not redundant. (T2)

Preparing learners to find employment...To teach them basic skills, to work in the trade. (T3)

However, they did perceive the learners as not being able to hold prestigious, challenging “white-collar” jobs.

Referring to the learner’s intelligence and work abilities T1 stated: “They reach a ceiling and [do] not go further”. Similar responses were given by the other educators, for example “...our boys get the lower order jobs. But then again considering their level of intelligence, for them it’s ok” (T3). From these statements, the hidden curriculum that is likely to be imparted to the special-school learners is that one cannot expect to elicit much learning from them. Nevertheless, at one point T1 also felt that some of the learners did have the ability to perform certain complex tasks and made this positive comment: “One should not undermine our learners; they are capable of performing certain tasks effectively.”

4.5.1.3 Social skills

When it came to commenting on the learners’ social skills, the responses were mixed. T1 described the learners as having problems with socialising and her reasons were as follows: “Our children do find it difficult socialising. Often because they don’t have social skills because their home environment is such where they don’t have good role models and so one constantly has to remind them in the classroom situation on how to conduct themselves. One encourages good social behaviour, skills in the classroom situation”. This last comment represents the covert curriculum at work.

Other educators felt that the learners are very capable and that they are on a par with the mainstream learners, particularly in the work situation. T2 mentioned that: “In terms of socialising they are not different from mainstream learners, especially at school they

have no problem socialising with their friends and educators.” She went on to say “...if these learners get jobs that they can manage, they will be content, they can fit in well with others.” T3 also mentioned that the learners would not have problems socialising as they are “...often in groups talking and socialising with their friends”. It is noticeable, however, that these teachers were drawing their assumptions from observing the learners amongst their peers in school. It will be seen later that the range of social activities that the former learners engaged in was limited.

4.5.1.4 Behavioural problems

As well as having shared views regarding intellectual capabilities, all educators also described the learners as displaying extreme behavioural problems. T1 described these learners as “...displaying erratic disruptive behaviour. On occasions they are very receptive and then it could be a small incident which upsets them and then it impacts on how receptive they will be.” Similarly, T2 stated: “Because it’s a special school you must expect between five to ten minutes that will be used up for discipline. This is because of the nature of our learner[s]. They just don’t like to be confined to a classroom. They want to revolt.” She further said: “When they come into the classroom it takes a while for them to settle down. Often I [the teacher] have to resolve fights between learners which happen over small unnecessary matters.”

T3 supported these views, reinforced by non-verbal gestures, such as shaking his head, pausing and saying:

Man... these kids are just out of hand. They fight and swear at each other and always break and destroy things in the workshops... [pause]...it’s hard.

For the educators, poor scholastic performance and behavioural problems are characteristic traits of learners with special needs and are some of the features that distinguish LSEN learners from mainstream learners. At the same time the educators seemed to recognise a vicious cycle of poor performance linked to low self-esteem.

4.5.1.5 Self-esteem

The educators pointed out that the learners themselves feel that they are at a special school because they are not able to make it in life. T2 simply said, “these learners display low self- esteem”. T1 stated that “these learners’ lives are characterised by failure and therefore [they] don’t expect much of themselves”. T3 said that “these learners feel that technical subjects are for slow people and that is the reason why they are offered a technical subject”. The educators in various ways mentioned that the learners mocked and goaded one another about the fact they attended a special school. Further, the learners showed very little interest in the schooling activities which added to the challenges facing the educators: “Many are not into academia and when they come into class they just want to break free and run out of the class” (T2).

The educators also felt that the learners’ low self-esteem in turn had a negative impact on the learners’ attitude towards learning. This issue was reinforced in the learner interviews. It will be seen later from the learner interviews that the stigma attached to being a special-school learner had a significant impact on their self-esteem as well as their perceived life opportunities.

4.5.1.6 Environmental issues

Together with the above-mentioned challenges, educators perceived learners as having learning difficulties because of language barriers: “Most of the learners are learning in their second language” (T2); “English is the medium of instruction and many learners are Zulu speaking” (T1). The educators also experienced difficulties as they themselves are not always proficient in a second language. “I sometimes try to explain to them in IsiZulu but all I know is ‘Funigalore’ Isizulu [meaning she only knows a substandard amount of the language] and that can make it worse” (T1). T3 felt that language was a major problem when it came to teaching the technical subjects. The example he mentioned was:

The names of tools, for example tenon and mortise machinethere is no IsiZulu word for that. Even when I asked the IsiZulu learners who could speak English they couldn't help. Even the isiZulu educators couldn't help!
[voice raised]

A possibility could exist that the isiZulu-speaking learners were never taught to read and write English. The primary school may never have catered for the fact that what they learn at school is not reinforced at home. When these learners could not compete with learners who had support from home, they were then regarded as slow learners who required specialised attention and schooling. This point was not pursued in this study.

4.5.2 The function of the educators at School X

The function of any educational institution is to promote teaching and learning in order to prepare learners for the future and adult life in particular. The task of the educator at a special school involves the same objective but with a great deal more complexity. This, as was mentioned earlier, is because these learners pose multiple challenges to the teaching and learning process. Together, these challenges and the way the educators perceive the learners have an impact on the educators' functions at the school, determining how and what the educator has to offer the learners in terms of the preparing them for adulthood. This theme is divided into two sub-themes: preparation for work and social development.

4.5.2.1 Preparation for work

All the educators shared the view that their most important function was to prepare the learners for work and the future: "The aim of teaching is to prepare the learners for the future" (T1); "Enable the learners to fit into society...equip them with skills and knowledge to live in the world and socialise" (T2). These skills would obviously be relevant for the labour market as well as in life in general, as was reflected in T3's response: "Preparing learners to find employment. To teach them basic skills to work in the trade. They would learn how to measure, mark, cut, assemble and finish projects."

4.5.2.2 Social development

Based on the educators' perceptions of the learners, two of the three educators (T1 and T2) felt that it was their duty to prepare learners for social aspects of life to help the learners cope with the social challenges that faced them. They also felt that the social

challenges the learners faced were similar to but more pronounced than those experienced by mainstream learners. T1 felt that she had to “help boost their self-esteem, develop in them proper social skills [and] enhance good conversational skills”. T2 indicated that her function was to “develop the language skills, inculcate the culture of reading within them, make up for the lack of role models they have at home and in the community”. T3, however, did not see the need to address the challenges facing the learners as he felt his role is “to teach the learners a skill so that they can find a job.” As regards the issue of self-esteem, T3 felt that the school could not boost self-esteem as “it prepared the learners for menial tasks.” He also felt that “because of their ability one cannot expect them to get top jobs so the standard of work is good enough [for them].”

4.5.3 The accommodation of learners at School X

These learners were taken out of a mainstream school and placed in an institution that is supposed to meet their needs. The researcher intended to find out how the educators accommodate the learners who are placed in their care. The following sub-themes highlighted the manner in which the school makes provision for accommodating the learners at school.

4.5.3.1 Adaptation of the curriculum

Educational institutions need a framework within which to work in order to reach desired goals or outcomes. School X refers to this framework as the curriculum. It has, however, emerged that there is no official curriculum for LSEN learners. Therefore there has to be an adaptation of the official mainstream CAPS curriculum on offer: “I

make use of a watered-down version of the CAPS document” (T1). T2 mentioned how she had to use “additional textbooks”. T3 had to adapt the curriculum but expressed his disgruntled view of not having proper guidance from the school management or the department of education: “We use the mainstream curriculum for learners with special needs. What sense is that? I have to adjust it to suit them”.

The departmental CAPS document on offer to them (DoE, 2011) is a guideline to the curriculum used at mainstream schools. School X adapts this guideline to ensure that its learners are able to manage what is offered to them and to reduce achievement failure by avoiding a repetition of the learners’ experiences of mainstream schooling. By scaling down the curriculum, the school offers its learners an opportunity to prepare themselves for adulthood by acquiring some sort of qualification that will help them to find employment when they finish school, which might not have been the case if they had stayed in the mainstream school. T1 and T2 were in favour of the ‘down-sizing’ idea and of using other relevant material to suit the level of the learners. T1 mentioned that “The curriculum can be adapted to suit our learners”. T2 stated that she must “adapt the CAPS curriculum because of the different abilities in the classroom...If they [the learners] are not going to cope then certain portions are left out”. T3 on the other hand found that the idea of down-sizing was impossible. He felt that one can show learners how to make smaller projects but “one cannot water down what to teach in technical subjects.” He was adamant that “measurement is measurement, you can use simpler examples but you cannot simplify the concepts.”

However, because adaptation of the curriculum is left to the discretion of the educators it is firstly subjectively influenced by the educators' perceptions of what the learners should or should not learn and secondly by what teaching and learning should entail.

Even though there is no curriculum for special schools the educators stressed important concepts of the overt curriculum for example:

Arts and culture help them understand different religions, respect for one's culture and beliefs also tolerance for one another. (T1)

I basically teach self-concepts. For them leaving the mainstream schools and coming to a special school is a big challenge. They feel that they are different... in fact they look down upon themselves. So I teach them that whatever they do they must not bring themselves down. They are capable of making it in life because they learn but only at a slower pace. This is the content of my LO lesson. (T2)

(T1), in contrast to the majority of educator comments about learner socialising abilities, also emphasised the need to nurture these skills:

Our children do find it difficult socialising often because they don't have social skills because their home environment is such where they don't have good role models and so one constantly has to remind them in the classroom situation on how to conduct themselves. One encourages good social behaviour [and] skills in the classroom situation.

4.5.3.2 Methods of teaching

The methods of teaching used by the educators help to address the challenges that the learners face in preparation for adulthood and are reflective of the nature of the learner. The educators use various methods including audio and visual and multilevel teaching “so as to make the lessons as interesting as possible to cater for the learners’ short attention span” (T1). They also use worksheets and group work at a level that will enhance the learners’ experiences at school. For example “because of spelling and language problems I make use of more ‘underline the correct answers’, multiple-choice and matching to minimise the feeling of failure because their lives are full of failure” (T1); “I do not concentrate on the theoretical aspects I place more emphasis on the practical aspects of the trade. However this limits their [the learners’] creativity [and] design capabilities” (T3). This educator comment reflects his concern for the humanistic approach to the curriculum and highlights the hidden aspects of the curriculum. A theoretical analysis of curriculum will be elaborated on in Chapter Five.

4.5.3.3 Updating and training as part of the curriculum plan

In trying to accommodate the diverse needs of the learners, educators are constantly improving their knowledge of these learners. T1 has improved her qualification regarding special education and she “diversifies lessons to accommodate all the learners”. T2’s comments also showed her attempt to improve her knowledge of special education: “I often attend workshops to improve [my] understanding of these learners.” T2 also deals with the problems experienced with these learners by conducting research: “I try to find solutions to the problems via the internet”. T3 is committed and feels he is trying very hard. However, he feels that “the demands placed on the educators by the

administration in terms of record-keeping makes me more committed to the admin and record-keeping and not to the learners' success.”

4.6 SUMMARY OF EDUCATOR RESPONSES

These educator responses, with some exceptions, created an overall picture that the learners presented intellectual and behavioural challenges with the result that achievement expectations were very limited. Nevertheless, the educators appeared to expect the learners to be able to function in the adult world through partaking in suitably undemanding jobs and drawing on their limited social skills. In other words, it was assumed that the learners would find a place in society that expected little from them. There was a tendency to see learning as the learners' problem. However, one teacher made a connection between self-esteem and environmental influences and endeavoured to encourage learners to think positively about themselves. It will be seen from the former learners' interview responses that other factors, often stemming from the image of the school itself and its label as “special”, had a significant impact on self-esteem, job prospects and opportunities for socialising in the wider world.

Nevertheless, within the confines of how they viewed the learners and tasks, the educators demonstrated a commitment to helping learners in a variety of ways including seeking to update their own understanding of how to work with the learners.

What is taught at school will affect the learner's preparedness for adulthood. Teaching a “watered-down” curriculum of the Grade 6-8 content of the CAPS document would imply that the learners are functioning at a lower level. Because the learners are placed in a predominantly technical school, not out of choice, further implies that academic

subjects are for “intelligent learners” and technical subjects are for “slow learners”. The nature of the curriculum and teaching will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

4.7 LEARNER THEMES

Without learners in the equation the role, function and purpose of any school would be defeated. Learners attend school with a particular purpose in mind – to prepare for the future – and it is the school’s intention to best suit this purpose. Information regarding the success or failure of the school programme to prepare for the adult world is best obtained by assessing the activities learners are engaged in when they leave school. Therefore the former learners of School X provided a useful source of data especially with regard to the school’s contribution to their preparedness for adulthood.

The learners who participated in the interviews were eager to answer the questions. They gave the impression that they expected answers from me, as well, regarding their future. Some of them used the opportunity to express their subjective feelings rather than the facts of School X. Since I am still an educator at School X, I noticed certain types of answers arising from the interviews. Some of the responses appeared to be designed to please me, often saying “good” things about my subject area in particular. Some former learners were hesitant to answer, perhaps in recognition of the fact that I am still an educator at the school. There were also some former learners who spoke without inhibitions. However, amidst all of this, very salient data were collected resulting in pertinent themes emerging. The themes that emerged included *encountering a special school, knowledge and expectation of School X, feelings about leaving school, experiences of the curriculum, experiences of educator attitudes, experiences of adulthood, and relevance of special school to adult life and socialising.*

4.7.1 Encountering a special school

4.7.1.1 Reasons for attending a special school

The learners' encounters of a special school would be informed by their reasons for attending. Most learners expressed similar reasons for attending a special school. Ten learners expressed their inability to cope with the academic levels at mainstream schools as being the main reason. Some of the reasons were:

Reading problems (L1, L6, L7)

I was a bit slow in the mainstream school and could not function as the other learners. (L2)

[I was a] Slow learner. (L8)

Learning disability. (L9)

Had a reading problem and couldn't cope with maths... my teacher told my mother I must go to School X. (L14)

I could not cope with my school work and had difficulty with reading, spelling and maths. (L16)

However, in contrast to the educators who stressed behavioural disorders as being a key factor of concern, only two of the learners admitted that they attended a special school due to behavioural problems.

I gave the teachers a hard time [laughs] and they expelled me from primary school. (L4)

I was very naughty and was not performing and got expelled [laughs]. (L5)

One learner was not sure about the reason he attended a special school.

I don't really know but my teacher told my mother to put me in School X. (L13)

One learner blamed his home circumstances:

It's because of my background. I lived with step-parents and they didn't take good care of me. (L12)

4.7.1.2 Learners' knowledge and expectations of School X

The learners were exposed to mixed information about School X which depended to a large extent on the source of information. In terms of promoting the school, typical of any advertisement, on open-day the learners were exposed to the positive contributions made by the school to the lives of learners. This information may very well have been based on theoretical assumptions informed by the vision statement of School X, which is "To guide our learners to obtain both life and technical skills and to take up positions as worthy citizens". The school's mission statement is "Exposing our learners to skills and fundamental learning areas in a differentiated and holistic approach by practicing a variety of teaching and learning styles in a nurturing and stimulating environment" (School X brochure). Therefore, there were learners who, based on the positive

information they received, were excited and eager to be part of School X. It was a change from the problems of the mainstream school.

I wanted to see what the new school could offer. I heard it offered a trade.

They also said we will be able to find jobs easier than learners from other schools. (L2)

I wanted to move away from the boring school. I also wanted to do a trade.

(L3) I heard that it is a trade school and I will be doing things I enjoy. (L4).

Heard from other learners that you can learn a trade and be able to get a job.

(L13)

Concentrating on learning a trade, finding employment and engaging in practical tasks points to the fact that these learners favoured the non-academic learning areas and at the same time they were subtly exposed to concerns relevant for their future. This point is highlighted later when some learners unconditionally expressed their dislikes for academic subjects offered at School X.

On the other hand there were learners who entered the school with feelings of anxiety because of the negative things they heard about School X, particularly from other learners. Feelings about going to the school were expressed as: “Sad” (L1), “Disappointed” (L5), “Bad” (L7), “Nervous” (L12), “Not so good” (L15).

Learners received negative responses from some of their friends while other friends were indifferent, perhaps because they had not heard of School X.

They [my friends] were fine, they were ok [Picks up her shoulders giving the impression that it was acceptable]. (L15)

However, those friends who knew that School X is for LSEN learners reacted negatively towards the learners who were going to attend. Participants were exposed to the following comments from their friends which are the reasons why they felt negatively about special schools.

The learners mocked me. They laughed at me and said only stupid learners go to School X. (L1)

I had problems with them because they kept saying that only stupid children go to School X. (L4)

They laughed because it was School X. (L12)

They mocked me. They said that crazy learners attend School X. (L13)

Learners were even embarrassed by the name of the school and mentioned “that the name of the school must be changed” (L11, L14), though one learner managed to turn this image around sufficiently to save face for himself:

First they mocked me and said I am going to a mad school but then when I told them it’s a trade school they stopped. (L9)

Even though this image did not last in the real world it is interesting that it served as a protective piece of discourse at this stage, reflecting the school brochure's vision statement.

Learners were also exposed to negative information from other learners within the school.

But some boys said that we can't get jobs with our qualifications. (L7)

School X learners don't get jobs. (L16)

However, whilst at school the learners did have hopes of making a success of their lives.

We wanted to start our own business and get good jobs...also buy our own cars. (L13)

[We] would go to FET and become career women. (L14)

4.7.1.3 Feelings about leaving school

There was evidence of some sadness to leave school: "In a way sad, won't be seeing my friends and teachers" (L9). However, many of the learners expressed relief. Their responses show that their school days were not without challenges and that leaving the school would be to some extent a relief to the learners.

I was happy to be out of THAT SCHOOL! [Raises voice]. (L6)

[Shakes head as if in disgust and after a long pause answers] HAPPY, VERY HAPPY. I had enough of School X...[because] they are racist especially the office. I am a white girl and I was going out with a black boy and that was a big problem for the management. To keep us apart they kept suspending him and then me. (L11)

I felt very glad so I can restart (L1).

Very happy... [shakes his head]...had bad experiences with management... always got suspended. You go to the office for help but instead of help[ing] you...you get suspended. (L10)

Happy... [because] I had bad experiences with the principal...[when prompted to elaborate] They talk lies. When the other boys were smoking, because I was walking with them they suspended me. And I don't even smoke. When I tried to explain Mr P said I must come back with my parents. That's why it's better to bunk the lesson then you don't get into trouble with the teacher and then you don't get suspended. (L7)

This last observation also reflects a medical model of disability in that you are labelled in a certain way which means that you have no voice of your own. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

4.7.1.4 Experiences of the curriculum

The school formal curriculum, being divided into academic and technical components, received divided responses.

4.7.1.4.1 *Technical Curriculum*

The learners enjoyed the technical subjects and were convinced that while they might not be using what was taught to them in the technical centres right now, they would be able to apply the technical knowledge they learnt at school at a later stage in their lives if and when they found employment. They enjoyed the technical subjects for various reasons.

I mostly enjoyed the hairdressing lessons those were the technical days. The technical centre was relaxed we could walk around and do as we please[d], we were free to talk, laugh, joke with our friends. (L1)

Yes welding, it was very nice we had a nice teacher and I knew it was going to help me with my job. (L3)

I really enjoyed cooking. Mrs C was a very good teacher. She showed us everything about cooking. And we made nice tasty food. (L14)

English and Needlework, the teachers were good to us. They explained the work and we could understand it. (L15)

The technical orientation was very much a favourite for many of the former learners. Many felt that the technical subjects are work-related and relevant to adulthood in spite of the fact that many of them are currently unemployed. The former learners mentioned that they learned a lot from the workshop subjects and that the educators played an important role in guiding them. Possibly because I am a technical educator, many spoke favourably about my technical subject.

Woodwork was my favourite subject.... Made good projects and went on outside jobs. (L13)

However, for some the technical subjects also marginalised them.

When it came to the outside jobs only the good learners [in School X] did the jobs. (L5)

I love fixing cars but only the intelligent boys [in School X] were allowed [by the teachers] to work on the customers' cars, the real thing, we had to work with the models. (L12)

The fact that they could not manage with academic subjects at the mainstream school meant that these former learners were placed in a special school that concentrates on technical subjects. The implication is that technical subjects are simpler than academic subjects. This further implies that they would be able to cope with the technical subjects which in turn would assist them to find employment. However, many found this not to be the case when they left school and entered the job market.

Many learners enjoyed the technical orientation and saw the benefits of it. This may well have come to them in the form of the hidden curriculum that the school offered. By offering technical subjects for a full day the school made the learners believe that the technical subjects were of more value to them than the academic subjects and therefore required more attention and more time.

The fact that the boys and girls did different technical subjects reflected a hidden curriculum which endorsed stereotyped thinking that boys are capable of doing more

strenuous, heavier jobs such as building, motor vehicle repairs and that girls should do less dangerous, less labour- intensive jobs because that's what they are only capable of doing.

4.7.1.4.2 Academic Curriculum

The school is called a prevocational school. Many of the learners felt that the education they received, especially for the academic subjects, was of a poor quality and did not prepare them for a vocation. They equated what they received to that of primary school level.

The subjects we were taught were like we were in Grade 3. (L1) It made me feel like I was doing primary school work. (L7) Should have rather stayed in the primary school. (L16)

Yes [laughs] very easy. Just like Grade 5 work. (L13)

Often they felt that the content was substandard especially because it was offered to them, learners with special needs.

While there were learners who enjoyed most of the academic subjects, many felt strongly that the subjects offered at School X were a waste of time and found no use for them.

NS [Natural Science] for example I'm not interested in how the plant makes food... how is that going to help me find a job. Arts and culture [gestures with open hand]... Zulu dress can't help to get a job. (L2)

Boring and that's why I should bunk lessons. (L13)

While there were two learners who enjoyed all the academic subjects, eight of them enjoyed some and three did not enjoy any academic subjects (four remained neutral). Nine found the academic subjects irrelevant to learning a trade and of no use to adulthood. They believed that there is no link between academic and technical subjects. These learners also didn't enjoy being confined to the classroom.

It became apparent that the former learners' preconceived notions of the quality of their qualifications received were reinforced by the outside world. When they went looking for jobs they heard comments such as these:

Employers would ask us, "What is Level 4?" At School X the stuff they teach you is not relevant for jobs out there. (L5)

They were now convinced that the academic subjects were of a lower standard than they should have been and were concerned that the formal curriculum did not expose them to other subjects as in the mainstream school, for example Accountancy and BE (Business Economics):

Hau! Because of School X. They don't teach proper subjects like Grade 12 work. Our papers are of no use. They must change the school's name then maybe we will get jobs. (L3)

Sir we didn't do subjects that can really get us jobs. The girls from the other schools did subjects like.... Accounting and BE and that's why they are getting jobs. (L14)

Some former learners believed that they had been taught easier, less challenging subjects:

They [the academic subjects] were easy, made me feel clever. (L12)

The hidden curriculum coming out of this message is that LSEN learners are not cut out for the more challenging subjects. The implication is that they are not able to deal with certain learning areas and the school is therefore preparing them for menial jobs.

4.7.2 Experiences of educators' attitudes

The former learners' feelings about the educators' attitudes towards them varied.

Some educators were recorded as treating the learners in a positive manner.

Mrs U said, "Don't let people look down upon you." (L1)

Sir, you told me I will be able to start my own business. (L13)

They did tell us we can get good jobs and not to listen to all the bad things people told us. (L15)

The covert curriculum message is endeavouring to encourage these learners to see themselves as potentially successful. However, many former learners felt that some educators just had no faith in them.

Four learners mentioned that "Many teachers said that we won't make it in life" (L1, 2, 5, 7); "we are not in the mainstream school" (L1).

Mr D called us “School X cases” and when we answered [back] we went to the office...and you know what happened...sir we got suspended. (L3)

The hidden curriculum suggests that these learners must conform and be passive recipients because they don’t know anything, especially their rights. If they went against the norm it resulted in suspension from classes even for minor offences.

The learners felt that many educators ignored them and treated them indifferently: “Told us to do as we pleased” (L14); “Teachers lacked control of the learners” (L9).

Some former learners were humiliated and insulted when they had difficulty grasping certain concepts, for example they would be sent out of the class. Some educators didn’t explain well and made learners copy notes from the chalkboard, saying that the material was too complex for the learners.

The educators insulted us... [they] felt that because we go to a special school we had no feelings. (L15)

This treatment reflects a medical model of disability. The hidden implication is that it is pointless explaining certain concepts to these learners as it is beyond their ability to understand.

Many former learners felt that the disciplinary strategies imposed upon them by the educators were similar to those used on prisoners and that they had been suspended for trivial matters.

The learners that were sent to the office were treated with disrespect often like prisoners. (L4)

My parents were always called in and to avoid bringing [my] parents to school I used to [play] truant. (L12)

Some former learners felt that they were treated like “special cases” (L7); not allowed to explain themselves. They felt that they were abused by management because they were learners with learning difficulties: “Management thought that we knew nothing” (L7).

4.7.3 Experiences of adulthood

Efforts to obtain employment are the initial experience of adulthood for school leavers and learners expect to find employment on completion of their studies.

School X is called a prevocational school; however, five learners felt that the certification they received was of no use in the world of work as some prospective employers did not know of, recognise or respect the qualifications the learners obtained from School X, or did not know school’s form of grading. These were some of the reasons that former learners gave for not being able to find employment:

No Grade 12 and no proper qualifications. Employers would ask us, “What is Level 4?” At School X the stuff they teach you is not relevant for jobs out there. When giving a CV and when you put School X you[‘ve] got no chance. Most people know that School X is for deformed people, for slow learners, people who take long to learn. (L5)

Oh! Because of School X. They don't teach proper subjects like Grade 12. Our papers are no good...The school I've been in and the subjects that I did...No man, once you go to School X you are branded so no matter what subjects you do you still won't get a job. I only found that out now. (L12)

Don't have a job. When asked for a welding job the one man said, "How can special learners weld?" when he knew I came from School X. (L10)

Gave my CV in many places but because of the school name people don't respond. When they hear you come from School X, no luck. The name of the school must change. (L11)

Some former learners found employment but most often not in the technical field that they were trained for at school. Those who did find employment had negative experiences which they attributed to having attended a special school. These negative experiences, they felt, stemmed from the stigmas attached to the school and the stereotyped thinking of the employers. Furthermore, they were competing with learners from mainstream schools and FET colleges. Employers feel that these special school learners would not be productive.

Some former learners expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs because of poor salaries, working conditions and because the work was not what they expected.

The pay is low and the boss expects you to start early and finish late without overtime. If you squeal he tells you to find another job. He makes you do everything. You must even eat your lunch while you are working. (L15)

Only one learner, who was employed in the technical area that he was involved in at school, was satisfied. He worked in a motor repair shop: “Wouldn’t change my job” (L4).

In summary, there is a contrast between what the learners expected of the school and what they actually received especially in terms of job opportunities. Was going to the special school the best idea? Was the school effective in preparing the learners for employment? It appears that because of preconceived notions of special schools, employers are hesitant to employ these learners. This is an indication of how extensively the medical model of disability extends into the wider world.

4.7.3.1 The relevance of special schooling to adult life

Now that they are out of school only seven former learners believed that the school prepared them sufficiently for adult life. These former learners believed that only certain subjects such as languages and mathematics were to a certain extent of assistance to them:

Like Maths helps with making calculations but that’s all. (L12)

English and Maths...I can talk to the customers in good English. (L15)

Many of the former learners were unemployed and not doing anything constructive. When asked what they did in their spare time they responded: “Play music, visit my friends and just sit and talk” (L7); “Try not to get up to nonsense, sit and talk to my friends” (L6); “Hang out with my sister and my boyfriend, walk the dogs, play monopoly and just chat” (L11).

However there is evidence that some had absorbed some educator comments that they needed to prepare themselves for the future:

The teachers told us to get high grades or else we won't get good jobs. And then we won't have a good future. (L4)

We must believe in ourselves. Sir, you told me I will be able to start my own business. You also told me it's tough out there. Mr D and Mr P also told us to make a man of ourselves and to support our families. (L13)

4.7.3.2 Socialising

While some of the educators indicated that they thought that the learners were capable of socialising, the reality is that the school leavers socialise in a relatively narrow way. Many of the former learners stay with family, at home and are not as yet engaged in constructive adult-orientated activities. They “chill, play soccer and watch movies” (L3).

I ride [a] motorbike, hang out with my friends, party and get drunk as all teenagers [do]. (L4)

[I] sit at home...and look after my baby sister. (L14)

These comments indicate that some former learners are still engaged in childlike activities. Socialising as a learning exercise has not been promoted in terms of developing hobbies and expanding their social networks.

Most of the friends they associate with are learners from School X with similar interests and who are also unemployed. The possibility exists that they more feel comfortable with other LSEN learners as they won't be rejected or maybe they were not schooled to mix with other learners.

Some former learners were involved in relationships; however, many felt that they were not yet ready to get involved for various reasons: "No I feel that I am too young and I don't have a job" (L1). Many didn't want to get involved because they were unemployed. This is ironically a very responsible and mature thought.

All the above issues reflect the lack of preparedness for adult life. This mismatch between some of the educators' perceptions of the former learners' socialisation skills and the reality of how past learners are socialising will be discussed in Chapter Five.

4.8 CONCLUSION

These interview findings indicate that stigmas that are attached to the school affect the assumptions and beliefs about the learners and ultimately affect educators' expectations of them.

Being unable to "make it" or cope in the mainstream schools, learners are referred to a special school, which creates a negative impression of special schools. The implication is that the school has to be of a lower standard to accommodate these learners. When the educators don't expect much of the learners they don't offer the learners many challenges or complex tasks, thereby limiting the learners' chances of dealing with the complexities of the adult world.

A response to these ideologies would be the idea of inclusive education. However in terms of inclusive education, the findings reveal that the guidelines on offer by the DoE do not adequately cover or address the many specific issues unique and pertinent to School X.

The findings prove that many learners with disabilities were marginalized when it came to finding jobs. Many employers do not want to employ learners from a special school as they view them as being sub-standard. However the guidelines make no provision to help learners cope with life after school. The guidelines focus mainly on the formal curriculum and ignore the actual curriculum in practice. The study further found that the learners mocked and goaded one another about the fact that they attended a special school. Here again no provision is made for even the hidden curriculum to help the learners to improve their self esteem.

All the educators interviewed emphasized the extreme behavioural problems that learners at School X displayed. Strategies for dealing with such difficulties are excluded from the idea of inclusive education. Also no mention is made of how educators are to deal with environmental issues. For example, how do the educators cope when they (the educators) are not proficient in the learners' language?

Therefore it can be seen that these documents are as the name suggests mere guidelines to the process of inclusive education. Whilst they seem like possible options in theory, they lack the practical implications.

In this chapter the findings generated from the data on the educators' teaching strategies, their perceptions of the learners, their role function and the learners'

expectations of a special school were presented. This chapter also described in detail the themes that emerged from the transcripts of the interviews which contributed to the richness of the data.

Chapter Five will discuss these themes in relation to the theoretical concepts of disability, curriculum and transformative learning.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four provided a thematic interpretation of the participants' experiences of teaching and learning in a special school. Themes emerged from the educators' and learners' responses to the research interview questions. The emergent educator themes were: *educators' perceptions of the learners, the function of the educators at School X and accommodation of learners at School X*. The learners' themes were *encountering a special school, experiences of adulthood, relevance of special schooling to adulthood and socialising*. Chapter Five further explores how the responses relate to the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework used for analysing the findings comprised the models of disability, curriculum and transformative learning. The reason for combining these theories was to see to which model of disability was reflected in the school curriculum, particularly the enacted curriculum, and to what extent the curriculum would facilitate transformative learning as a process that facilitated the learners' transitions to adulthood.

Models of disability have been discussed in relation to the medical and the social models. These models describe how the learners are either labelled (medical model) or supported (social model) in terms of the challenges they face with regard to academic performance. The medical model is cited as blaming the individual for not being able to perform. Strategies of assistance within the medical model focus on seeking a method or a technique for rectifying the problems within the individual. The expected result is to adjust the individual who is different to fit in to the "normal" society (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001).

The social model of disability on the other hand looks at how society has failed to accommodate or make provisions for all people, each with their own uniqueness, and its inconsideration of diversity (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). This model blames society for not catering for those who do not fit in with the “norm”. For example if a person without feet cannot climb the stairs to get to the top of a building, the medical model will label the person as having a problem for being incapable of doing so. The social model, however, will blame society for not providing alternative means for the person to reach the top (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009).

Curriculum as part of the theoretical framework dealt with the theoretical approaches to curriculum (behavioural and humanistic approaches) and its conceptual configuration as being formal or informal, manifested as the practiced or enacted curriculum, which reflects the implicit curriculum (hidden and covert).

Behavioural theorists focus on the influence the environment has on the learner (Smith, 1999). They believe that the influence of the environment plays a major role in learning. By contrast, the humanistic approach is more concerned with the personal and social aspects of human growth within the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

The formal or explicit curriculum is an instruction from some higher authority in the form of the official syllabus, documents, learning guides, teaching plans, framework and organisation of instruction. The formal curriculum covers various aspects of achieving teaching and learning goals. It is formally designed to ensure the smooth

running of the school. It is really concerned with content and often the content that the planners wish to transmit.

The implicit curriculum is all the things learners learn at school that are not part of the official explicit curriculum. It is made up of the covert curriculum (that which is intended but implicit, for example punctuality) and the hidden curriculum (that which is unintentional but implicit, for example sexism) (Hoadley & Jansen, 2010).

Finally the theoretical framework, transformative learning, is best described by Mezirow, a proponent and authority on transformative learning. Cited in Taylor (2010, p.5), Mezirow states that “Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of one’s experience in order to guide future action”. The expectation is that the revised interpretation is a positive outcome that develops the learner’s overall frame of reference and ability to function within society. In terms of transformative learning, this chapter will discuss, with examples, how former learners were exposed to experiences which led to transformative learning, both positive and negative, and the impact this had on their transition into adulthood.

In sum, this chapter will discuss each component of the theoretical framework in turn in order to relate the findings back to the literature that has been reviewed.

5.2 MODELS OF DISABILITY

According to Ustun (2002) disabled people are seen as more of a liability than an asset to the economy. On the other hand Wiman and Sandu (2004) believe that, given the appropriate facilities to accommodate them, disabled people are able to function as well

as any other person. There are several theoretical models of disability. With regard to people with learning disability, the medical and social models of disability are of particular relevance (Leicester, 1999; Pillay & Terlizzi 2009; Rule & Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001).

For the former learners of School X it was very apparent that the medical model dominated their transition from school to adulthood. This came from three directions: their peers, their educators and society.

The evidence of the influence the medical model had on their peers is found in statements such as:

They [my friends] mocked me. They said I'm stupid. (L1)

I had problems with them [my peers] because they kept saying that only stupid children go to School X. (L4);

They [my friends] teased me and laughed at me and said that School X is for learners who are not right. (L8);

Most of them [my friends] laughed because it is School X. (L12)

The influence of the medical model is also evident in the educators' perceptions of the learners, as shown in these examples:

Many teachers put us down... they used to tell us that we will not make it in life and [therefore] we can do whatever we wanted to do [in class]. We were treated like special cases. Management thought that we knew nothing. (L7)

The educators insulted us and felt that because we go to a special school we had no feelings. (L15)

I was treated very differently. Always told to do my own things. The teacher always picked on me and treated me differently from the rest of the class.

They always said bad things to me, called me stupid. (L6)

Perhaps more significantly, the interviews with the educators themselves reflected, in less dramatic terms, similar values regarding the learners. Some of their responses pointed constantly to the learner having a problem and being in need of remediation, hence having to attend a special school. T1 described the learners as “lack[ing] the basic reading skills and also comprehension skills” and being “frustrated that they cannot cope with the work”. She compared them to mainstream learners and found them to be different because “simply, they cannot make it in the mainstream schools...well academically at least ...and that’s the difference.” T1 went on further to give reasons as to why she had to adapt the curriculum: “[because] their intelligence level is low. They battle with simple tasks”. She justified this statement by saying “...otherwise the learners would not understand...After all the CAPS document is for the mainstream learners and not our learners.”

T2’s comparisons of the special-school learners to the mainstream learners also highlighted the medical model of disability: “They were actually pulled out of the

mainstream schools. This means that they need special educational attention, education. They are not the same that is why they are put in special schools.... They need to be treated accordingly.”

In terms of their intelligence and behavioural qualities, T2 stated: “The learners themselves have barriers to learning such as low IQ, low attention and concentration span, language barriers, Oh! And not forgetting their behavioural problems.”

The comments made by (T3) are also reflective of the medical model of disability: “Well they come here because they can’t make it in the mainstream schools...Intelligence [shakes his head] now that’s a different story. They are not bright and cannot figure out things. They have to be told everything otherwise they are lost. These are slow learners after all.”

All educators made mention of the learners’ impairments. There are many examples of labelling and discourses associated with labels of special need learners, for example: “They are incapable”, “cannot do adult work”, “can’t learn”, “are a waste of time”. These labels, however, extend from previous schoolmates right through the system to trying to find a job. No participants indicated that the school might be playing a part in creating the challenges that these learners face. The social model would have taken learner perspectives into account and worked around their expressed needs. Also the terms used – for example T3’s above comment that learners “can’t make it in mainstream schools”– has negative connotations, further implying these learners are “substandard”, which in turn excludes the possibility of the school environment or system itself as disabling them.

However, one educator attempted to use a more social model approach with the learners. She kept on stressing that the learners “should never give up” and that they could “be someone one day”. “Mrs U said, ‘Don’t let people look down upon you. You[’ve] got the potential within you and you can use it.’” (L1). Many former learners seemed to have picked up on similar aspects of what they were taught about life; this kind of message really seems to have struck home and given them some hope. This is a good contributor to the process of transformative learning which will be discussed later.

Serlis and Swart (2006) highlighted that it is not only physical structures that challenge disabled people but mindsets as well. The medical model of disability is reflected in the hidden curriculum through educators’ expectations of learners’ participation in the adult world. Learners are not expected to achieve or do adult-like things and are treated like primary school children. Even educators’ behaviour modification strategies involve no discussion, just punishment.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, all the educators felt strongly that their learners are very capable of socialising. However, when the former learners were asked about what they were doing now that they have completed school it was determined that that they hardly ever socialise in an adult-like manner. They reflect a very narrow ability to do so. They are confined to family connections and a few peers and there is no evidence of developing new networks, joining adult associations and taking responsibilities. Many of them just “sit around”, go to church, or “hang out with friends” (most of whom were with them at School X):

Chill. Play soccer watch movies. (L3)

I ride [a] motorbike, hang out with my friends, party and get drunk as all teenagers [do]. (L5)

I play soccer; go to the mall now and again go to the clubs. (L2)

Well my parents are strict with me. I only go to church and then stay at home. I have no friends other than my church friends, the youth and the neighbours. I stay at home, watch TV. I try to read and I help my mum to clean the house. (L1)

It can be surmised, therefore, that School X has not significantly prepared its learners for socialising in an adult manner. The way in which these learners socialise is also a reflection of the outcomes of the medical model of disability in action as it reflects the low expectations of what is required in terms of socialising for this type of person.

Furthermore, this low image of the former learners was reflected throughout society. Some prospective employers had already absorbed negative images of the learners simply because of their affiliation with School X.

When you attend a special school you are seen as being different, especially by the boss or the person giving the job. (L1)

When you show the boss they want to know, “How can boys from a special school weld?” They say we will bring the company down, we can only clean flux and grind welds. Most people know that School X is for deformed people, for slow learners, people who take long to learn. (L5)

In fact nine of the learners attributed the reason for them not having a job to the fact that they attended a special school.

They know that we are special learners and they don't give us jobs...[Yes, I have tried to find a job]... when I asked the man for a welding job he just said, "How can special learners weld?" (L10)

I gave my CV in to many places but because of the name of the school people don't respond; when they hear you come from School X, no luck.

The name of the school must change. (L11)

All of the above quotes are very reflective of the medical model of disability. People see the label first and make assumptions based on the label. When we see how many of these former learners do not have jobs (and even those who do have jobs do not use the subjects taught in school) the overriding issue is not what they learned, but the label attached to the school itself – the medical model of disability has created a discourse and work environment that sees young adults with learning difficulties as unemployable and unable to work technically. This view is even reflected in some of the educators' comments, exposing elements of the hidden curriculum coming into play.

5.3 CURRICULUM

Clark and Hirst (1989), and Mitchell (1999) emphasise that education is contextual, while Leicester (1999) claims that education is for the purpose of community upliftment and has to be made available to all people. This view gives the disabled person an equal place and voice in society; therefore a curriculum, if designed appropriately, will make an important contribution to learners' preparation for work and socialising. The merits

of a formal planned curriculum designed to achieve the desired objectives cannot be denied. However the implicit curriculum which is included in the actual practice within the classroom also has a major role to play. Some implicit learning that takes place at school is intended even though it is not mentioned or examined. This is called the covert curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). However, learning may well happen without the participants being aware of it happening, for example stereotypes of boys being used as a resource for helping with heavier tasks. The unintentional message sent out is that boys are stronger than girls. This is referred to as unintended implicit learning or the hidden curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

An analysis of how the curriculum was experienced by the former learners and educators in this study is based on the overall approach of the curriculum and includes aspects of the behaviourist approach and of the covert and hidden curriculum.

5.3.1 Behaviourism

The enacted curriculum generally followed a behaviouralist approach (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). This behaviouralist approach becomes evident in the manner which the educators tried to change the learners' behavioural patterns. For example T1 tried "to help them master the English language and with maths, it's the basic concepts." She further stated, "Also if they master English they will be able to hold a conversation... [which will] definitely be of value in the workplace one day."

Similarly, T2 aimed to "enable learners to fit into society...[to] equip them with skills and knowledge to live in the world and socialize". T2 and T3's goal was "to teach them basic skills to work in the trade". The former learners too made statements that showed

where the behavioural approach was operational, for example “it made me a better person” stated L13, referring to what was taught to him at school. Similarly L4 commented, “Teachers told me not to misbehave and I stopped, I pulled up my socks and that’s why I have a job today.” However; these positive outcomes were overwhelmingly offset by other ways in which the curriculum was delivered, both covertly and hidden.

5.3.2 Formal curriculum

The formal curriculum was necessarily dictated in part by the national curriculum. However, at School X the educators and the former learners made it clear that the standard of delivery was low. For both the educators and the former learners, the number of subjects available was limited. These were some of the comments the teachers made about how they adapted the formal content:

Firstly the curriculum is not designed for them. It is the school that waters down the curriculum to suit their needs. (T1)

Not much but I do [“water down” the curriculum] because if they are not going to cope then certain portions are left out. Especially that which is of a higher standard. (T2)

The standard is low; it doesn’t meet the demands of industry. Our boys get the lower-order jobs. But then again considering their level of intelligence, for them it’s okay. (T3)

The former learners echoed very similar sentiments. For example L1 mentioned “*Ja*, they [the subjects taught] were a little different from my old school. This school had technical subjects. But the standard of the subjects were lower. The subjects were simpler.” L5 mentioned, “They were different because they *included a technical subject* [raised voice]. But the others [subjects] were of a really low standard especially when compared to AAA school [his previous school].” L12 said, “Not so different but hell easy.” This was the general feeling amongst the former learners although some did find the subjects, especially the academic subjects, difficult. For instance, “Maths it was very difficult” (L8); “Maths, IsiZulu it was very difficult” (L 15); “IsiZulu it was difficult” (L16); “IsiZulu it was hard and I didn’t understand what went on” (L 17).

Furthermore, messages which were not intended or included in the formal lessons were informally conveyed to the learners with major repercussions, for example stereotypes of boys and girls having different technical subjects offered to them.

5.3.3 Covert and hidden curriculum

Many examples of the covert and the hidden curriculum as mentioned earlier reinforced the medical model of disability with implications for the nature of any transformative learning that might have taken place (this will be discussed later).

5.3.4 Covert, enacted curriculum

Some implied learning that takes place at school is intended even though it is not prescribed. This is called the covert curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009) and is part of the enacted curriculum (Mikre, 2004).

In this study there were examples of good experiences from the covert-as-enacted curriculum which impacted positively on learner self-esteem and motivation, for example:

The technical centre was relaxed, we could walk around and do as we please[d], we were free to talk laugh joke with our friends. (L1)

Teacher C spoke about saving. Therefore I'm saving and maybe [I'll] go further with my studying and get a better qualification so I can get a metalwork job. (L2)

The teachers told us to get high grades or else we won't get good jobs. And then we won't have a good future. (L4)

I really enjoyed cooking. Mrs C was a very good teacher. She showed us everything about cooking. And we made nice tasty food. And... [short pause] LO [life orientation]. Mevrouw [Mrs] U was just like a mother to us. When we had problems she was always there for us. I miss her. (L14).

While these former learners had problems in the mainstream school, there were indications from these remarks that they came to the special school wanting to learn. They wanted to be treated like mainstream learners learning mainstream subjects and at appropriate levels. They wanted to have the experiences and challenges of job opportunities that mainstream learners have. They definitely did not want to be treated differently. However, the hidden curriculum gave the learners a very different message:

Oh because of School X. They don't teach proper subjects like Grade 12. Our papers are no good...The school I've been in and the subjects that I did...No man once you go to School X you are branded so no matter what subjects you do you still won't get a job. I only found that out now. (L12, commenting on trying to find employment)

Many educators said bad things especially the academic teachers. When we gave them a hard time they would say that is why we are at a special school. We are not going to make it in life. We will get the low-class jobs and become car guards. (L2)

The implication here is that learners with special needs generally give their teachers a hard time and that they are always unsuccessful.

The fact that the teachers watered down the curriculum and even left out content that they considered to be of a higher standard is reflective of the hidden curriculum. It implies that the learners are not capable of coping with the prescribed curriculum.

In summary, although there were examples of positive experiences of the enacted curriculum, the majority of former learners appear to have received a constant drip-feed of negative messages about themselves and their abilities which reflected societal attitudes towards the label attached to the school and what it stood for – a place for people with learning difficulties and behavioural problems. The combined features of a medical model approach to disability and a hidden curriculum which reinforced that model served to produce a form of transformative learning which created negative, rather than positive learning. Although this was not a universal outcome, as L5 and L1

indicated, many learners transformed their initial positive aspirations for work prospects into a slow realisation that their schooling and its associated labels had served to make them unemployable.

5.4 TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

The desired expectation of any learning process is that the learners will develop new meaning perspectives that will help them engage positively in their lives after school and is an ideological goal for adult learners (Smith, 2002). Mezirow (1990) calls this the perspective transformation – a process which leads to altered frames of reference through various stages of critical reflection. According to Mezirow, cited in Taylor (2010, p. 5) “Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of one’s experience in order to guide future action.”

For young adults a transition to adulthood is a key point in their lives. However, for the former learners in this study, that process of transformation rarely occurred as a positive experience. The following statements reflected the contradictory messages that many learners had to negotiate in order to understand their job prospects:

Lots [of people] told me that because I attend a special school I would not be able to get a job. They told us the passes we get from this school have no value. But we wanted to try to get good jobs. The friends told us that we must start again when we leave school if we want to get good jobs. (L1)

I heard lots of bad thing about the school. Things like we can’t get jobs coming from School X. I heard that no one fails at School X but my friends

and I decided that we are going to try very hard and find ourselves jobs especially in the metalwork field. (L2)

No ways, they [the subjects at school] are not helping at all with life out of school. That's because it's like work we did in primary school. It's of no use. It's not of high school standard. Now that I'm out of school I realise that I can't use the subjects to find a job. (L1)

The contradictory messages received by the former learners resulted in a critical reflection process that resulted in them gaining new understandings but which produced a negative rather than positive integration of new schema about themselves and their worth in society.

We are not like the girls from the mainstream schools...They are intelligent and they know everything that is why they are getting the jobs. They do the subjects that give them the jobs. (L8)

Hau! Because of School X. They don't teach proper subjects like Grade 12 work. Our papers are of no use. They must change the school name then maybe we will get jobs. (L3)

The learners expected the school to give them a way into work but their experience proved that was not the case. Many encountered problems when they went job hunting.

For example:

When I asked for a welding job the one man said, "How can special learners weld?" when he knew I came from School X. (L10)

The main reason [for not finding work] is the school that I've been in. Just mention School X and nobody wants to give you a job. Also the subjects that I did. They were easy all right but they were not job related. We don't get the proper papers from School X and because we don't have Grade 12.
(L12)

The power of some of the comments made to the learners by their teachers served to reinforce rather than counter these poor school reflections thus reinforcing a negative self-image which has remained with them into adulthood. For instance:

Many teachers said that we won't make it in life ... we not in the mainstream school. (L1).

Many educators said bad things especially the academic teachers. When we gave them a hard time they would say that is why we are at a special school. We are not going to make it in life. We will get the low-class jobs and become car guards. (L2)

Many teachers would put us down...They used to tell us that we will not make it in life and we can do whatever we wanted to do...[We were] treated like "special cases". Management thought that we knew nothing. (L7).

Although Mezirow (1990) suggests that childhood frames of references are often challenged in adulthood, resulting in new learning, the implication is that this is a positive process "more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14). However, for people with disability the opposite is often the case (Rule &

Modipa, 2011). The meanings that many of these former learners made based on accumulated experiences translated into a belief that they had been misled by the educators in terms of what their lives would be when they finished school.

Firstly I can say the teachers made false promises about when we finish school. They said that we would be able to get jobs. Also if you get in trouble you are sent to the office and instead of help[ing] they degrade you and tell you that you are not going to make it. That lowers your self-esteem.
(L5)

Many teachers lied to us. They told us that once we leave school we will get good jobs. They said that we are getting a trade certificate. But when we go for jobs the people just laugh at our certificates. Everybody knows School X. When they see your reports then they don't want to give you jobs. (L6)

This process can be categorised as negative transformative learning. In spite of being encouraged that their qualifications from the school would help to give them a trade and a job, the former learners found that the outside world treated them in the opposite way. The qualifications that they gained are “useless” and the name of the school labels them as being unemployable. The result is that they slowly realise that they have not been prepared for the world of work.

Although it is clear that not all their experiences at school were negative, negative experiences formed the building blocks of the dominant images of the former learners' understanding of themselves.

Learners' experiences are governed by their educators' pedagogical approaches which will influence the learners' opportunity for transformative learning. Learners use knowledge gained at school to construe meanings about adult life and guide their future actions. The challenges of adult life for learners with disabilities are compounded by the fact that they have to compete with learners from mainstream schools for the same jobs. The fact that they are schooled separately and exposed to an adapted, "watered-down" version of the general curriculum used by mainstream schools and expected to compete with mainstream learners for the same jobs emphasises a view of disability as a form of inequality (Leicester, 1999; Mitchell, 1999; Rule & Modipa, 2011).

In spite of these examples of negative transformative learning, some learners produced new and more positive frames of references as a result of positive things said to them by some teachers:

We must not give up. We can make it. There are lots of opportunities for us out there. (L8)

There were also examples of teacher efforts to encourage a pro-active outlook:

Many teachers told us positive things... [like] I will make it in life. I'm very outspoken and have a good future. (L11)

[The teachers made] me feel good because they told me I'm sharp. (L12)

Occasionally this appears to have sustained their self-image into adulthood in spite of negative job experiences.

It [negative job outcomes] did not affect me because I believe in myself and I know that I will make it. (L1)

5.5 CONCLUSION

Most of the transformative learning processes these former learners were exposed to were negative. The negative comments they received from their teachers and fellow learners were reinforced in the labour market. Often these learners experienced belittlement, ridicule and criticism. They were seldom, if at all given a chance to voice their opinions. They were effectively treated in a sub-standard fashion. Hence the meaning perspective that was inculcated in them would develop them into adults with a negative outlook on life and with low expectations of themselves.

An analysis of the former learners through a transformative learning lens coupled with curriculum and disability lenses exposes the extent to which the hidden curriculum is perpetuated at all levels of society and has a lasting impact on how the former learners view themselves as adults. It also shows the significant effect that positive messages from school teachers had on former learners who managed to hold a critical appreciation of their prospects as a result.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study has been framed by the overall research question: to what extent have former special school learners in School X been prepared for adulthood? This question was then broken down into the following sub-questions:

1. To what extent did the special school prepare the learners for adulthood?
 - 1.1. What were the learning experiences of the learners at school?
 - 1.2. How did the school and the curriculum prepare learners for the world of work and socialising?
2. How can the school curriculum be improved for better preparation for work and adult living?

I analysed and interpreted the stories the participants told me which included those aspects of the learners' life experiences that led up to the decision to place them in a special school. The educators' insider information about relevant life and teaching experiences also contributed to the detail needed for my study.

6.1.1 What were the learning experiences of the learners at school?

6.1.1.1 Reasons for attending a special school

Some of the learners had a positive attitude and some were not sure as to why they had to attend a special school. However, most of the learners identified a negative connotation with School X based on negative information they had received from past learners and their peers at the school.

6.1.1.2 Experiencing the curriculum

Most learners favoured the technical aspect of the curriculum with only a few expressing positive comments about the academic subjects.

6.1.1.3 Experiences of educator attitudes

There were some educators who displayed positive attitudes towards the learners. However, there were many educators who were recorded as treating the learners in a negative manner. Learners mentioned that they were regarded as being worthless. The learners experienced very negative forms of punishment and stated that they were never given a chance to voice their opinions. Voicing their views was interpreted by the educators and school management as being defiant and often ended in the learners being suspended, usually for trivial offences.

6.1.1.4 Experiences of preparation for adulthood

The learners felt cheated by attending School X. They were initially made to believe that by learning a technical subject they would be able to gain employment when they

completed school. There were five learners who felt that the certification that they received was of no use in the world of work. Prospective employers did not know of, recognise or respect special-school qualifications. Some learners found employment but not in the technical field that they followed at school. They also experience negative employment conditions. They attributed these circumstances to having attended a special school which had a negative stigma attached to it, and to the stereotyped thinking of the employers. There seems to be a negative link between the name of the school and the job prospects.

6.1.1.5 The relevance of special schooling to adult life

Now that they are out of school only seven former learners believed that the school had prepared them sufficiently for adult life. The majority were disgruntled with the school. They felt that they had wasted their schooling years and were no better off than when they started.

6.1.1.6 Socialising

While some of the educators indicated that they thought the learners were capable of socialising, the reality is that the school leavers socialised in a relatively narrow way. All stayed with family at home and were not as yet engaged in constructive, adult-oriented activities. They gave little evidence of having acquired adult responsibilities or acquiring new forms of social activity.

6.1.2 How did the school and the curriculum prepare learners for the world of work and socialising?

6.1.2.1 Preparation for work

All the educators strongly believed that their purpose and function was to prepare the learners for adulthood. They were of the opinion that the subjects they taught would allow learners to be able to find employment and cope with the social challenges that faced them.

6.1.2.2 The accommodation of learners at School X

Identifying these learners as being different from mainstream learners, the educators have to make provision to meet the learners' demands. They have to accommodate the learners by adjusting the teaching and learning strategies at School X. Since there is no formal curriculum for learners with special needs, the educators adapt the CAPS document to suit the needs of these learners. The educators also use various methods including audio and visual and multilevel teaching as part of their strategy. Furthermore learners are offered technical subjects to prepare for the real world when they go out and work.

There is a dominant image of the medical model of disability. The second question, how can the school curriculum be improved, derives from analysis of the learner and educator responses, as being "unteachable". This view is reinforced by the covert and the hidden curriculum and some of the educators' attitudes towards the learners. This view is subsequently carried forth into and also reflected by the outside world.

Prospective employers' perceptions of the school also bear testimony to this view: just the name of the school is enough to render the former learners unemployable.

As a result the meaning the learners made of their school experiences and post-school job experiences often resulted in revised meaning perspectives that built negative self-images and expectations rather than positive ones.

However, there were examples of positive transformative learning – “revised interpretations of one's experiences in order to guide further action” (Taylor, 2010, p. 5) – for some learners. The results of some educators' encouraging comments caused learners to think positively about themselves and have hope for the future.

Some learners continued to have hope based on this schema which they had built up in spite of their rollercoaster experiences of disappointment (going to a special school, hope in learning a trade, diminished self-image, low-level curriculum and inadequate qualifications, continued belief in the future - never give up).

These different experiences contributed to the way in which learners kept revising the meaning that they attached to themselves and to this world.

6.1.2.2.1 Updating and training as part of the curriculum plan

In trying to accommodate the diverse needs of the learners, educators are constantly improving their knowledge of these learners, particularly the challenges and needs of the learners.

6.1.3 Recommendations

As stated in Chapter One, South Africa is in a state of crisis regarding unemployment. Every year unemployment figures are rising. Due to stereotyped thinking, learners with disabilities are further disadvantaged in the labour market. It is therefore important to consider the positive and negative aspects of the former learners' experiences (whilst recognising that this study is only a snapshot of one particular group of former learners and some of their teachers) in order to make the necessary adjustments to the schooling experience so that these learners are able to fit into the workplace. The consistency of interview responses, particularly from the learners, suggests certain patterns that need addressing if such learners are to raise their hopes and prospects for a more integrated life in the adult world after leaving school.

The following are recommendations as to how the school experiences could be improved in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, the school's image, the hidden curriculum, teacher training and post-school follow-up and support.

6.1.3.1 The curriculum

It is recommended that the CAPS document be adapted to include specific adaptations for special schools. This is because the document was designed primarily for mainstream learners. Therefore to follow this document would be incongruous as these learners are placed at School X because they experience difficulties with mainstream material.

A suggestion is that special schools have specially designed curriculums developed from past experiences and drawn up in conjunction with the industrial sector. Schools

need to identify where exactly these learners can fit into industry and then design a curriculum for technical subjects in those areas. The academic subjects must be drawn up with the technical subjects in mind and technical terminology must be reinforced in the academic lessons. When planning the curriculum, there must be an interrelationship between academic and technical learning areas.

6.1.3.2 Pedagogy

Lessons must progress entirely at the pace of the learner. Also lessons must be modelled on a work-like set up to help prepare the learners for the future.

6.1.3.3 School image

There needs to be a concerted effort to change the image of the school. People need to be conscientised about the merits of the school. This is possible by planning open days not only for the parents but also for the greater public. There must be a permanent link with industry so that prospective employers will see these learners as employable. School X must not isolate itself from other schools but must integrate with other schools, for example through sporting activities, in order to make mainstream learners aware of the disabled learners in their community and assist all learners to understand and be able to socialise with one another. School management should work to make the community believe that there is a place for these learners in society and that technical orientation has a major role to play in the economy.

6.1.3.4 Teacher training

Every educator involved with special education should have the appropriate training so that they understand the nature of these learners and are aware of what to expect and how to deal with them. The educators should also receive regular, in-service training to keep abreast with the latest trends in industry in order to assist learner placement.

6.1.3.5 Post-school follow-up and support

The school must remain in contact with the learners after they have finished their schooling. The school needs to offer a counselling service for former learners and continued guidance with career decisions. Learners should also be able to return to school to brush up on certain technical aspects of their studies. This should be done in conjunction with industry to assist with costs [as most schools already have limited resources for their current learners] and to ensure that training is relevant.

6.1.3.6 Hidden curriculum

The school needs to remove all types of stereotyped behaviour. A starting point would be to open up all technical subjects to both boys and girls and not restrict learners to choosing subjects that were traditionally categorised into “boys’ subjects” and “girls’ subjects”.

6.1.4 Possible avenues for further research

It must be remembered that these recommendations cannot hold for all special schools as the study was a limited, small-scale study. Therefore the following aspects were not adequately covered and could lead to further research:

- 1) Reasons for employers feeling the way they do about learners with special needs.
- 2) How former special-school learners who are employed sustain their jobs.
- 3) An observation study into how learners and educators interact within the classroom itself in order to produce a more balanced assessment of relationship dynamics in the school.

6.2 CONCLUSION

The study found that in trying to explore the former learners' preparedness for adulthood, the educators blamed the learners for not being able to cope and the learners pointed fingers at the school for not offering them enough to equip them for work and socialising. At the end of a four- year course it was determined that these learners' experiences whilst at school did not have a significant impact on their ability to integrate with the demands of the real world. On the contrary, their schooling has contributed to them being marginalised in the workplace.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION LETTER – TEACHERS



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**
**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION LETTER: ETHICAL APPROVAL NO.
HSS/0245/012M

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Department: Adult Education

Project title: An exploration of former special school learners' preparedness for adulthood

Principal investigator: Jerome Francis

Supervisor: Professor Julia Preece

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in this educational study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with other community members if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which former learners feel their school experiences prepared them for adulthood and the world of work.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because your experiences are relevant and important for this study. I am proposing to interview former learners of the school and a few teachers from the school.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, I will give you this information sheet to keep and I will ask you to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Address: Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3209 Website: <http://cae.org.za>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

Withdrawal from the study will not have any negative consequences for anyone choosing to do this.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

The interviews will take place at a location of your choice.

I will ask the same questions to all the former learners and a set of questions to the teachers about how their teaching.

The meetings with you will last between one to two hours. I will tape record the discussions with your permission. I will also jot down some notes.

The interviews will take place between May and June 2012 and the study will be completed in December 2012.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

I will not include your name or your address in this study. I will do this so that nobody can recognise you from the information that you will give.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The final research report will be made available at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

The results of this study may also be presented at a conference and published in a journal. I will not write your name or address in any report or book.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The University of KwaZulu-Natal is supervising this project as part of my M.Ed qualification.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

My supervisors at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

11. Contact(s) for Further Information

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project please contact:

Professor Julia Preece: Professor of Adult Education at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Education Building, Pietermaritzburg, Email: preecej@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you!

JEROME BERNARD FRANCIS

Date ...1st April 2012.....

I Consent to being interviewed in relation to research
project ethical clearance no. HSS/0245/012M.

I understand that my real name will not be used in any public report, unless authorised by myself
and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequences for me.

.....

.....

Signature

date

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION LETTER – LEARNERS



RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION LETTER: ETHICAL APPROVAL
NO.HSS/0245/012M

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Department: Adult Education

Project title: An exploration of former special school learners' preparedness for adulthood.

Principal investigator: Jerome Francis

Supervisor: Professor Julia Preece

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in this educational study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with other community members if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which former learners feel their school experiences prepared them for adulthood and the world of work.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because your experiences are relevant and important for this study. I am proposing to interview former learners of the school X and a few teachers from the school.

Address: Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3209 **Website:** <http://cae.org.za>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, I will give you this information sheet to keep and I will ask you to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawal from the study will not have any negative consequences for anyone choosing to do this.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

The interviews will take place at a location of your choice.

I will ask the same questions to all the former learners and a set of questions to the teachers about their teaching.

The meetings with you will last between one to two hours. I will tape record the discussions with your permission. I will also jot down some notes.

The interviews will take place between April and May 2012 and the study will be completed in December 2012.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

I will not include your name or your address in this study. I will do this so that no body can recognise you from the information that you will give.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The final research report will be made available at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

The results of this study may also be presented at a conference and published in a journal. I will not write your name or address in any report or book.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The University of KwaZulu-Natal is supervising this project as part of my M.Ed qualification.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

My supervisors at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

11. Contact(s) for Further Information

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project please contact:

Professor Julia Preece: Professor of Adult Education at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Education Building, Pietermaritzburg, Email: preecej@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you!

JEROME BERNARD FRANCIS

Date ...1stApril 2012.....

Please sign the attached slip if you consent to being interviewed.

I Consent to being interviewed in relation to research project ethical clearance no.HSS/0245/012M.

I understand that my real name will not be used in any public report, unless authorised by myself and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequences for me.

.....
Signature date

I (parent/guardian) consent to my son/daughter being interviewed in relation to the research project HSS/0245/012M.

I understand that real names will not be used in any public report, unless authorised by my son/daughter and that he/she is free to withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequences for her/him.

.....
Signature date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHERS

1. What subject/s do you teach?
2. What are your aims of teaching this subject?
3. Do you experience any challenges when teaching these learners?
4. If so what are the challenges and how do you attempt to overcome them?
5. Are there challenges that these learners face at the school as a whole as compared to their age-mates?
6. What are your expectations for these learners when they leave school in terms of, their integration into society, in the field of work, marriage, having a family, keeping on the right side of the law etc?
7. How would you describe these learners in terms of intelligence and socialising skills or abilities?
8. Is the subject that you teach relevant to the learners when they leave school?
9. Is it preparing them for your expectations (Q6) and other aspects of life?
10. Briefly describe the content of one of the subjects you teach?
11. The content that you teach was it:
 - 11.1. Prescribed? If yes answer question 12-15 or
 - 11.2. Did you choose it? If yes go on to question 16.
12. How much of the formal prescribed curriculum do you follow?
13. Do you adapt the content or make any changes to suit the requirements/ needs of the learners and the context?
14. What percentage do you leave out? Why
15. How much do you add on? Why?

16. What led you to make this choice (Q11.2)?
17. What are some of the methods do you use to teach these learners?
18. Is it possible to describe a typical lesson?
19. What are the main educational challenges these learners have in relation to:
 - 19.1. Actual pure learning?
 - 19.2. Learning the curriculum that is taught to them?
20. Are they allowed to make their own choices regarding :
 - 20.1. The academic subjects?
 - 20.2. The technical subjects?
21. What are your views to the answer to question 18?
22. In an ideal situation, if all things were possible, what do think are the kinds of educational experiences these learners should be getting regarding:
 - 22.1. The world of work and socialising?
 - 22.2. The level of qualification that they are allowed to reach?
23. What other aspects do you think can be added on to the curriculum to make the learners' experiences at school more adult appropriate in terms of work and socialising?

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS

1. What are the reasons for attending a special school?
2. How did you feel going to a special school? Happy Sad excited Angry Other
3. Why?
4. How did your friends from your previous school react to your going to a special school?
5. What happened on your first day at the new school, how were you treated?
6. What did the teachers say to you on the first day?
7. What did the other learners say to you and how did they treat you on the first day?
8. What subjects were you offered at school?
9. Were they different from the subjects of your previous school?
10. Did you enjoy these subjects? How did it make you feel?
11. Were there subjects that you wanted to do but weren't allowed to do them?
12. Which subjects were they?
13. Did you enjoy any lessons?
14. Which ones and why?
15. Did you not enjoy any lessons?
16. Which ones and why?
17. What were some of the things that your friends told you about your future when you leave school?
18. What were some of the things that your teachers told you about your future when you leave school?

19. How did that make you feel?
20. How did you feel when you finished school?
21. Do you have a job? If yes answer Q22-28 If no go on to Q 29-31
22. What job is it?
23. How long are you holding it for?
24. How did you get this job? (Did you apply on your own or did someone help you?
Who was it?)
25. Do you think you got this job because of your school experiences?
26. Do you like/dislike this job?
27. Why?
28. If you could choose another job, which one would it be? Why?
29. What do you think are the reasons for not having a job?
30. Do you think that if you had done different subjects at school, you could have found a job?
31. If yes, what other subjects?
32. What technical subject did you do at school?
33. Are you using what you learnt in the technical subject for the job you are doing?
34. Are your schooling subjects helping you with life out of school?
35. Which ones and how?
36. Did you try out any advice that you received at school regarding adult life?
37. Can you think of anything that you learnt, or that someone told you at school that has had an impact (positive or negative) on your adult life?
38. What is it?

39. How did it affect your life?
40. Now that you are out of school what do you do in your spare time?
41. What social activities are you involved in?
42. The friends you hang out with- Do they have jobs? What kind?
 - 42.1. Are they studying? What are they studying?
 - 42.2. Were they with you at your last school?
43. Are you in a relationship?
44. Would you like to have a family/
45. Do you understand the responsibilities of having a family?