

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF
LEARNERS BY THE FREE STATE CHILD GUIDANCE CLINICS**

BY

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

THIS PIECE OF WORK IS DEDICATED TO THE ENTIRE RADEBE FAMILY (AM AHLUBI).

ABSTRACT

This study explores the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by Free State child guidance clinics so as to realise the goals of Inclusive Education. A systematic and scientific study examined the psychological assessment practices used by the Free State child guidance clinics. The study agitates for the eco-systemic theory as its theoretical framework to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners as opposed to the medical positivistic approach. The advent of democracy in 1994 led to the transformation of the South African education system. Education changes included the review of the use of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in schools. Such changes in psychological evaluation were necessitated by the fact that traditional psychological evaluation methods were used to perpetuate apartheid policies. Psychological tools and techniques used were biased towards certain learners.

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used to complement each other as part of triangulation. Five child guidance clinics were targeted as the research population for this study. These were: Child Guidance Clinic 1, Child Guidance Clinic 2, Child Guidance Clinic 3, Child Guidance Clinic 4 and Child Guidance Clinic 5. Participants for the study were selected from all these clinics as they had all the characteristics needed to be part of the study. Purposive sampling then became the appropriate sampling style for the study. Not all members of the child guidance clinics were reached to be participants in the research study. Ultimately, 33 members of the child guidance clinics formed the research sample. Data production techniques used were structured questionnaires, clinical interviews and file analysis. A total number of 12 interviews were conducted, 25 questionnaires administered and 50 files audited. The literature survey provided a theoretical base to look at previous studies conducted on this topic and to provide a theoretical lens through which this study was conducted. Data produced were presented and qualitatively and quantitatively analysed.

It became evident in this study that psychological assessment and evaluation of learners was culturally biased against certain learners. Many psychological tests used to assess learners had a content bias and were not standardised for the culturally diverse South African society. The general picture that emerged from the study about the assessment of learners was that many learners who were referred to child guidance clinics for psychological intervention were eventually placed in the special education programme. A majority of the assessors were white and speak Afrikaans.

This created problems as they assess black Southern Sotho or Xhosa speaking learners because they are not conversant with learners' language. They then had to use interpreters to help them. Tools and techniques that they used were influenced by the medical model as its theoretical base. In this study, it is argued that the medical model needs to be revisited as it does not help learners to realise their full potential. Instead, the eco-systemic model is foregrounded as the assessment model which is compatible with the principles of inclusive education. It then became evident that the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners especially in an inclusive education context must be revisited.

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is concluded that;

- The total number of specialists working at the Free State child guidance clinics is too limited;
- Most of the therapists, especially psychologists, still maintain that psychometric tests can play a role in inclusive education;
- The aims of psychological evaluation should aim at the learner's needs and for support;
- Placement of learners in special settings should be discouraged and those who need moderate to high levels of support should be assisted at the full service school or resource centre.

It was not the intention of this study to discuss psychological assessment and evaluation in depth as this is a very wide concept. Time constraints could not allow that. Further research is required on other aspects of psychological evaluation. Recommendations relating to how assessment in an inclusive education setting should be conducted and suggestions for future relevant research on psychological assessment and evaluation of learners are made.

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S.P. RADEBE

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention-deficient Hyperactivity Disorder
ANC	African National Congress
DBST	District-based Support Team
DoE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
EPI	Educational Psychological Intervention
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FAI	Free Attitude Interview
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ILST	Institutional-level Support Team
LSF	Learning Support Facilitator
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBST	Site/School-based Support Team
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SNA	Support Needs Assessment
TODA	Textually Oriented Discourse Analysis
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

1.1 PERSONAL BACKGROUND

To place this study in the proper perspective, I regard it as important to outline my own experience of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics in South Africa. There are five child guidance clinics, namely Child Guidance Clinic I, Child Guidance Clinic 2, Child Guidance Clinic 3, Child Guidance Clinic 4, and Child Guidance Clinic 5. These clinics provide a wide range of assessments and treatment interventions for behavioural problems, e.g. lying, stealing, aggressiveness, destructiveness, disobedience and hyperactivity. They also help learners who experience learning and emotional problems like stress, depression and phobias. Some learners have disabilities, while others show school-related adjustment reactions like grief, or disorders related to speech and language development. The clinics use different intervention strategies to assist learners and meet their needs. These strategies include individual and group psychotherapy, family and marital therapy, behavioural or cognitive therapy, play therapy, teaching study skills and social casework. All referred learners are seen by appointment while accompanied by either their parents or teachers. The clinics encourage those who accompany learners to prepare them beforehand for a positive visit to the clinic, e.g. by saying that the clinic will help them with their school, personal or family problems.

In 1999, I was appointed at the Bethlehem child guidance clinic in the Free State as a special education specialist. The clinic is located in one of the biggest education districts in the province, which is called Thabo Mofutsanyana, in the eastern Free State. The district is largely a rural area with a high level of illiteracy, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and child-headed families. The clinic services about 850 schools. It has six staff members in total. At that time there were two white male psychologists, one white female socio-pedagogue, one white female remedial specialist and two black male special education specialists. My duties as a special education specialist at this clinic included supporting schools through assisting in the administration of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners under the supervision of a psychologist, developing learner support materials, conducting workshops for teachers, and meetings with parents and health professionals from other departments in trying to help learners.

In the 850 schools, black learners made up approximately 70% of the total learner population in the district. I was one of the two special education specialists who had to attend to black learners' problems because of the language factor and cultural background. During my stay at this clinic, I became aware of the fact that the terminology and language used around psychological assessment and evaluation, the types of assessment tools used, the time devoted to the assessment and evaluation process, the report format and results feedback to schools, learners and parents presented enormous challenges. The psychological language used in the assessment reports was not understandable to schools, learners and parents. Some of the assessment tools used were not valid according to the learners' cultural background. Recommendations from assessment reports would sometimes not be implementable because of the lack of finance, resources and understanding.

In 2000 and 2001, I was chairperson of a special education interest group for all the Free State child guidance clinics. This gave me an approximate picture of how psychological assessment and evaluation of learners was conducted in the Free State child guidance clinics. I then started to ask questions about the relevance of the assessment tools used at the clinics, how learners benefited from psychological assessment, whether teachers understood the reports provided by clinics, how helpful the recommendations were to learners, parents and schools, and why clinics still used the medical approach instead of the ecosystem approach to the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. There was also growing concern from education personnel generally and parents about the increasing number of black learners in particular who were constantly referred for psychological intervention at the child guidance clinics and to other health professionals, together with subsequent recommendations and finally placement in special education. Who assesses whom was also a burning issue, as there was a lack of racial diversity in the staff at the clinics.

Whites dominated the clinics' staff, and that created problems in respect of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The schools and the education district members were also concerned about the way evaluation reports and recommendations were written. With the introduction of inclusive education, a new question arose, viz. about the compatibility of the psychological assessment and evaluation practices at the child guidance clinics with the goals of inclusive education. My experience as a special education specialist in the Free State education department left me with a number of unanswered questions about different issues on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics.

Working at a child guidance clinic gave me a golden opportunity to look critically at the basics of psychological assessment and evaluation, and the relationship between theory and practice. The experience I gained at Child Guidance Clinic 5 and the issues raised above indicated that very little had been done to address the issue of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting. The problem lies in the relationship between policy and practice. Department of Education (2001) addresses the abovementioned issues by stating that:

learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools, those requiring moderate support will be catered for in full-service schools and those who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools (DoE, 2001.p15).

At one point I had to make a presentation to the Bethlehem child guidance clinic staff about questions and ideas for further discussion and research. Responses from a number of staff members indicated that the Free State child guidance clinics needed to revisit the way psychological assessment and evaluation of learners was being carried out. Some of the clinic staff members indicated that their psychological assessment practices are not in line with the principles of Inclusive Education. At that time it sounded like a number of the staff members had moved away from the medical child-centred deficit approach to the ecosystem child-support approach. I was not certain whether the theoretical landscape and the psychological assessment philosophy presented to me reflected the practicalities in the Free State child guidance clinics. I suspected that my colleagues were only trying to please me or to be politically correct. My experience had also taught me that some of them were trying to comply with Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education EWP6 (2001). This indicated that further research was needed; hence this study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

In the process of providing quality education service delivery, the welfare and support of a learner is and will remain the main focus. Some learners have to be psychologically assessed in an attempt to determine how best they can be supported to maximise their potential. In the Free State department of education, child guidance clinics were tasked with the responsibility of providing psychological intervention to learners who experience barriers to learning and development. Psychology as a profession is thus presented with a challenge in respect of the transformation of psychological assessment and evaluation. The aims of psychological assessment and evaluation and the decisions based on the assessment and evaluation results are of critical importance.

In the educational arena, the assessment of learners has become an important and debatable issue, particularly during the human rights era. There is much debate about what psychological instruments/techniques actually assess about the behaviour of human beings. It then becomes imperative to look critically at the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners and how this impacts on their learning. In the past, if learners were not making satisfactory progress at school, they would be referred to a psychologist, social worker, speech or occupational therapist and/or a medical practitioner for intervention. Such a learner would then be classified according to the assessment results and sent to special programmes like remedial or special education. Psychological assessment is a very wide concept and different people understand it differently. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999, p. 101) say: “Assessment can be difficult to understand properly because it is a most complex and constantly changing field that impact on so many areas of our lives and has such far-reaching consequences.”

Since psychological assessment and evaluation are currently important aspects in the learning-teaching arena, it is imperative that their role in education be examined through a critical lens, and that the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation in education need to be revisited. A paradigm shift in psychological assessment and evaluation practices in education seems inevitable. Pahad (1996, p. 1) says, “A dramatic paradigm shift is needed in assessment practice across education and training in South Africa, as a logical and essential part of the transformation envisaged in new policies. The critical characteristic of the required shift is the move away from a judgemental to a developmental role for assessment”. The aims of psychological assessment and evaluation should be to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in order to help learners realise their potential. Psychological assessment practices should be relevant to the educational, social and economic needs of learners being assessed.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The aim of this study is to investigate the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics in order to realise the goals of inclusive education. The data analysis in Chapter 6 shows that many learners are still being marginalised through the use of psychological assessment instruments. Most therapists, especially psychologists, use psychological tests to determine the mental ability of a learner and predict future performance despite the fact that psychometric testing is banned from use in South African schools. There was a lack of policies that support learners who experienced barriers to learning and development until EWP6 (2001) was published.

There is also a lack of support structures for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. The aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners need to change and become developmental in nature so as to be compatible with the goals of inclusive education. In order to be able to make a systematic and scientific analysis of the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting, this thesis will interrogate the abovementioned and related factors. An ecosystem approach to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting is suggested. This will assist learners to meet their potential in the process of learning.

1.4 CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

In order to discuss the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners, it became important to look closely at the aims of psychological assessment and inclusive education. Because the concept of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners is too broad, complex and debatable, the focus will be on psychological testing and techniques. This thesis then becomes important as it brings together the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners, and the goals of inclusive education, in order to explain learner support in an inclusive education context. The starting point for argument in this thesis is that the medical child-centred deficit approach to the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners does not address their needs, contrary to what some would believe. This approach indicates what is wrong with a learner and does not show the educational plan on how to meet his/her needs.

The medical approach overlooks other factors that play a vital role in learners' performance. Some factors that play a role in the psychological assessment of learners are culture, emotional status of a learner during assessment, a learner's familiarity with the vocabulary used in the test, standardisation and the theoretical background of a test or a technique. Hence, a more accurate, supportive and developmental assessment and evaluation strategy for learners is required, which is humanistic in nature. To consider other factors that affect the mental ability of learners rather than determining it through psychological assessment and evaluation, is to move beyond the medical approach to learner support and development. Learners' abilities and their performance cannot only be determined through psychological assessment and evaluation; their socio-cultural background also plays a vital role. This thesis is about assessing learners in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses and supporting them to realise their potential. Assessment should be inclusive in the sense that it involves a number of assessment strategies.

1.5 RELATING THIS RESEARCH TO CURRENT DISCOURSES

The study is correlated with a Post-colonialist discourse. This study is interested in the empowerment of those learners who have been “excluded” from full participation in mainstream education and those who experience barriers to learning and development because of unjust policies and practices in psychological assessment and evaluation. Post-colonialists’ view of psychological assessment is that it should empower learners than excluding them from full participation in mainstream education. The above is echoed by Wilson and Ramphela (1998, p. 46) when saying “The ‘objectively’ disabled categories should be accommodated in comprehensive schools where recreational, medical and paramedical resources and services are made available to multiple categories”. It becomes discrimination if learners are assessed through psychological tests and made to feel inferior because they have performed ‘below average’.

Post-colonialism is a discourse countering the dominant discourse on psychological assessment and evaluation which relegates learners who experience barriers to learning and development into objects than dynamic human beings (Habermas, 1987). The dominant discourse continually position such learners as underachievers, marginalized, incompetent and end up being pushed to the periphery while post-colonialism attempts to position them in the centre and as having possibilities for achievement, growth and transformation (Fanon, 1994). Post-colonialists argue that if learners who experience barriers to learning and development are not empowered about the potential that exists in them, they end up believing that they are not capable hence they cannot fully fill their potential. Post-colonialism unlike the Positivists do not believe in quantifying human experiences. Human beings are dynamic and their experiences cannot be treated in the same way as if they are objects in a natural science laboratory (Harvey, 1909). Overlooking the shift in learner assessment and evaluation in an inclusive education context, which is to identify strengths and weaknesses with the aim of supporting a learner, will lead to continued exclusion, marginalisation, relegation, discrimination and oppression. This study wishes to locate possibilities for positive change within policy makers, implementers and assessors.

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To make a systematic and scientific research analysis, psychological assessment and evaluation practices and policies on learner support and development were examined. Views of practitioners (therapists) on the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners were analysed.

This study also looks at the Inclusive Education policy EWP6 (2001) which has been introduced by the Department of Education to give support to learners who experience barriers to learning and development (DoE, 2001). This then suggests that therapists in education should rethink using the medical approach, namely psychometric testing, as the sole psychological intervention strategy instead of the ecosystem approach. It has become clear that psychology as a profession will witness significant changes in its practices. This study also lays a foundation for further research that can be used in the formulation of alternative psychological assessment and evaluation strategies for learners. Lastly, the study seeks to demonstrate that the use of psychometric assessment as sole psychological intervention strategy does not address the needs of learners. The study would therefore endeavour to make suggestions that multiple approaches to learner assessment and evaluation are relevant to addressing the needs of learners.

1.7 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study looks at the compatibility between the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners and the principles of inclusive education. It also focuses on the use of the ecosystem approach to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education system.

1.8 JUSTIFYING THIS FOCUS

A focus on the aims of psychological assessment in an inclusive education context is important for several reasons. Firstly, psychological assessment has been used for a number of years to determine the mental ability of a learner and eventually to assign that learner to a particular learning programme based on the results of the assessment. This has far-reaching consequences for a learner scholastically, socially and economically. Learners have been categorised according to their “disabilities” which were determined through psychological assessment, and resources allocated accordingly (Lehmann and Mehrens, 1991). This was unjust and pure discrimination in the context of the provisioning of education. Hence, it is important for this thesis to focus on the aims of psychological assessment of learners in order to redress the imbalances of the past. Secondly, the majority of learners in South Africa (and people in general) have been excluded from participating meaningfully in the economy of the country because it has been wrongly proven (through psychological assessment) that their mental ability is such that it does not allow them to perform successfully and productively (Wilson and Ramphele, 1989).

The inequalities of the past which resulted from colonialism were crystallised during the apartheid era and had a great impact on the education system, especially on learners who experienced barriers to learning and development. An insight in how psychological assessment is envisaged to support and empower learners will make their lives meaningful and will enable them to become valuable citizens and contribute positively to the economy of this country. Thirdly, it is also important to gain an insight into the reasons why assessors – therapists –still use the medical approach to the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners instead of the ecosystem approach. These are the people who use assessment instruments to learners and write reports which influence the education of a learner.

Lastly, the fact that EWP6 (2001) focuses on learner support and development requires that therapists should change the way in which they assess learners. They need to function in a multi-disciplinary team, as collaborators or “consultants”, and work with other stakeholders in learner support and development. This thesis should therefore also focus on the new role of therapists in an inclusive education system.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions inform and guide the researcher on the objectives of this study.

- What are the assessment and evaluation techniques used by the child guidance clinics?
- Why do child guidance clinics assess and evaluate learners the way they do?
- What are the consequences of assessment and evaluation for learners?
- How do the assessment and evaluation practices influence the realisation of the goals of inclusive education?

1.10 HYPOTHESIS

The assumption in this study is that the use of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners (psychometric tests and techniques) by Free State child guidance clinics does not assist teachers in developing support programmes for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. It also does not help learners to realise their potential. Therapists still assess learners according to the medical discourse instead of the ecosystem approach. The investigation is therefore geared to determining the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners, especially in an inclusive education setting.

1.11 STATEMENT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this study is to foreground ecosystem discourse instead of medical discourse to learner assessment and evaluation. The ecosystem discourse to learner assessment is congruent with the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training/National Committee on Educational Support Service Report (RSA, DoE, 1997), which states that barriers to learning can be located within learners, within the centre of learning, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context. It is argued that these barriers to learning and development manifest themselves in different ways and they must be addressed in different ways and not only through psychological testing.

1.12 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on finding out what the various theories and previous findings reveal about the abovementioned questions. One of the subsections of the literature review, which deals with the theoretical framework, analyses the theories informing this thesis framework so as to respond to the research question, while the subsection on related literature will look at the most recent findings concerning the identified questions.

1.13 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents an overview of theory on psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting. McMillan (2000, p. 6) defines a theory as “a set of propositions that explain the relationships among observed phenomena. Thus, theories are general explanations of behaviour”. Psychological assessment and evaluation practices of learners in schools are changing rapidly. Presently, there is a philosophical move away from assessment and evaluation practices which result in categorisation, stigmatisation and labelling of learners to practices that acknowledge their needs and potential. This calls for the development of new understandings of teaching, learning and assessment. One such new theory which is indispensable in this era of human rights and inclusivity is the ecosystem theory to learner support, development and assessment. This theory includes the way community and culture influences the development and learning of a learner (Cook, Tessier & Klein, 1992, p. 112). In this theory the relationship between the school, society and the education system is highlighted as an important interconnectedness (Burgess, 1986).

The study argues that psychological tests used to evaluate learners must be informed by the ecosystem theory. According to Groth-Marnat (2003, p. 10), “Before using a psychological test, clinicians should investigate and understand the theoretical orientation of the test, practical considerations, the appropriateness of the standardisation sample, and the adequacy of its reliability and validity. Test users should carefully review the manual accompanying the test.” The review of the theoretical basis of a test and standardisation sample is of primary importance because it gives the philosophy behind the construction of a test. A test might be reliable but not valid when considering its theoretical underpinning and the time of its construction. Most of the psychological tests in use in South Africa are informed by theories which were constructed around 1950-60. These theories might no longer be applicable in the present time. It is therefore imperative that psychological tests used should be informed by current theories which look at the welfare and development of learners (Foxcroft, & Roodt. 2001). A more detailed explanation of the application of the ecosystem theory to learner psychological assessment and evaluation is provided in the next section.

1.13.1 The ecosystem theory

The ecosystem theory is by nature multidimensional, dynamic, and holistic and requires that every assessor become a skilled assessor. Attention is given to the learner’s cultural background, past experiences, daily activities and the assessment environment. The focus is on moving away from the disability-medical discourse on learner performance to a non-disability, ecosystem humanistic discourse. There is a paradigm shift from the perception that “a learner has a problem” to “a learner experiences a problem”, which is inclusive education’s understanding of barriers to learning and development. This understanding influences the way psychological assessment and evaluation of learners should be conducted in an inclusive education setting. The ecosystem theory views learner performance as influenced by environmental and other factors. It defines learner performance within a particular context. According to the predominantly medical child deficit theory, causes of learning breakdown are located within learners. This understanding has evoked the pathological label which has resulted in most learners becoming victims of psychological assessment. In the ecosystem theory, learning breakdown is not only located within learners but in their social milieu. In order to create an environment that is conducive to learning for all learners, we need to move away from an understanding of disability that is shaped by medical theory to an understanding underpinned by a human rights model (DoE, 2002, 17).

Ecosystem theory examines the interactive relationships of the different socialisation systems (home, school and wider social spheres) in which learners function, the way in which these affect learning, and the way in which they might be utilised for providing balanced, enabling environments for all learners. Ecosystem theory is like a spider's web; if one part is affected, the effect is felt by the rest of the parts. For the purpose of this study, the spider's web idea is used to explain that learners' behaviour or performance is constantly affected by a number of social factors. This theory suggests a holistic approach to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. Therapists who subscribe to the ecosystem discourse say learners must be looked at in terms of their mental, physical, and emotional development and also in the context of all the other social and cultural factors that serve to influence and shape their lives (Ozmon & Craver, 1995, p.145).

A therapist who is informed by eco-system perspective will assess a learner holistically. They will take into cognisance the role environmental and social factors play in psychological evaluation. In inclusive education, therapists will have to use different psychological interventions and therapies in their psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. Contemporary therapists use the ecosystem approach to learner assessment and evaluation, where therapeutic interventions like psychoanalytical, cognitive-behavioural and humanistic-existential approaches are used for psychological intervention. When psychological interventions and therapy are conducted, therapists must see learners as part of the social milieu in which they find themselves daily. Once a therapist understands the social context of a learner, they would be able to plan for a relevant intervention that will address the learner's needs. In addressing the special educational needs of a learner, the "whole school approach" becomes relevant. This approach is a systematic approach to educational psychological intervention which addresses the school system in which learners find themselves.

According to this system, a learner's problems could be ascribed to the school's policy, curriculum, classroom layout, school or social environment. In a socio-cultural context, learners are active participants in their learning and in the process of their mental development. Learning and development in this scenario are understood within the social context interplay. It then becomes imperative that socio-cultural factors must be considered when assessing a learner's scholastic performance. This calls for the use of assessment tools and techniques which recognise the influence of socio-cultural factors in psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. Socio-cultural theories of learning are congruent with the ecosystem theory of assessment, especially for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. A majority of these learners experience difficulties that are systems-related or extrinsic, and not necessarily intrinsic in nature.

Figure 1.1 below shows the interplay between different systems in a social context.

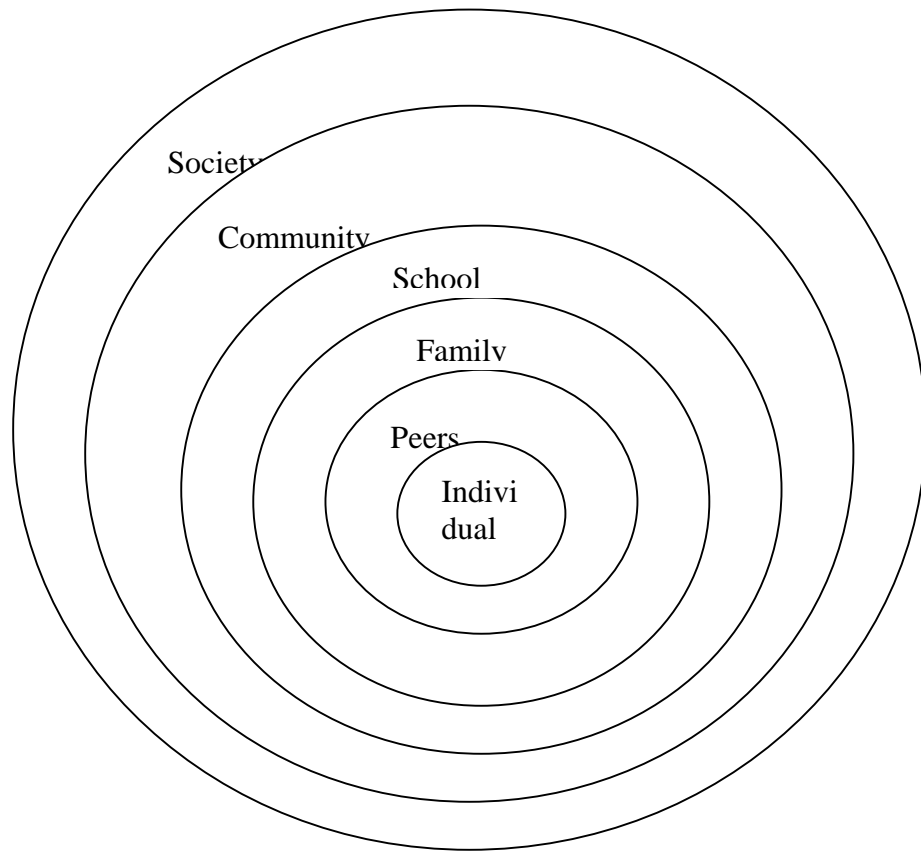


Figure 1.1 Interplay of different systems within the social context (adapted from Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997)

According to Figure 1.1 there is interplay between different social agents and the individual. This interplay greatly influences an individual's behaviour and thinking. It is therefore important that whenever assessment is conducted, the interplay between the abovementioned social agents should be taken into cognisance. According to this philosophy, an individual is a product of the influence of several social factors, so learner assessment and evaluation should consider such factors. The medical and psychometric approaches to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners have proved to be insufficient and not beneficial in communities like the multicultural South African community. I therefore argue that the ecosystem approach to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners is the relevant and valid approach, especially in South African schools. This study then foregrounds the ecosystem approach to learner assessment and evaluation as a relevant theory in an inclusive education setting.

1.14 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education in this study should be understood as an approach that seeks to address the needs of learners who experience barriers to learning and development, with specific reference to those who are excluded from mainstream education because of the use of psychological assessment tests and techniques. Inclusive education understands the use of any psychological measure as a means of supporting a learner who experiences barriers to learning, not as using it as an exclusionary measure. At the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, much emphasis was placed on inclusive education. The driving force behind inclusive education was realised in the resolution that became to be known as the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education. This statement was endorsed by 92 countries and 25 international organisations. The message was clearly articulated and took the following form (Unesco, 1994, p. 9):

We, the delegates of the World Conference on Special Needs Education representing ninety-two governments and twenty-five international organisations, hereby affirm our commitment to Education for All, recognising the necessity and urgency of providing education for children, youth and adults with special education needs within the regular education system, and further hereby endorse the Framework of Action on Special Needs Education, that governments and organisations may be guided by the spirit of its provisions and recommendations.

This became an obligation for all governments and social agents to provide education of learners who experienced barriers to learning and development in mainstream education. Furthermore, the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 4 March 1994 with regard to standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities reads (UN, 1994, p. 15):

Education in mainstream schools presupposes the provision of interpreter and other appropriate support services. Adequate accessibility and support services, designed to meet the needs of persons with different disabilities, should be provided.

Inclusive education means that all institutions should be accessible, promote equity, broaden the means and scope of education, and enhance the environment for all learners to learn regardless of their mental ability, physical or learning difficulties, or their emotional, linguistic, social and other conditions (Nkoane, 2006, p. 10).

Inclusion is not about reconstructing provision for learners with disabilities, but is a means of extending educational opportunities to a wide range of marginalised groups who may historically have had little or no access to schooling. Kunc (in Daniels & Garner 1999, p. 20) supports the inclusive education approach by arguing that:

- *The fundamental principle of inclusive education is the valuing of diversity within the human community. Every person has a contribution to offer to the world.*
- *In inclusive education, we abandon the idea that children have to become “normal” in order to contribute to the world. Instead, we search for and nourish the gifts that are inherent in all people.*

Inclusive education makes it possible for all to learn only if we can change our negative attitudes towards learners who experience barriers to learning and development, and make the teaching and learning environment conducive for them to learn.

1.15 JUSTIFICATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK USED IN THIS STUDY

The theoretical framework used in this study is important in the sense that it is emancipatory, more especially when considering learners who experience barriers to learning and development. The mental ability and performance of learners cannot only be determined through the use of psychological instruments. There are other factors that play a vital role. Ecosystem theory considers a number of factors that could determine the mental ability and performance of learners. Mahlomaholo (1998, p. 17-18) says, “African pupils cannot be seen as ‘inhabited’ by an inferior static cognitive ability. They cannot be understood to be fixed, reflecting inability to perform in mathematics”. Mahlomaholo (1998) is in agreement with the fact that the performance of learners is influenced by a number of factors, including socio-cultural factors. Ecosystem theory becomes relevant for this study as it addresses a number of factors in learner performance.

1.16 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology used in this study is informed by the qualitative and quantitative approach which makes the study to be a survey research study.

1.16.1 Justifying the integration of qualitative and quantitative strategies in this research

This study presents and analyses data from two different approaches, viz. quantitative and qualitative methods. Research tools used to produce data include a structured questionnaire, a semi-structured interview and file analysis. The reason for using both methods (triangulation) is to validate results, get a clear and more in-depth view of the phenomenon under investigation and produce a sound explanation. Triangulation gives an indication that a combination of methods becomes indispensable to gain a fuller picture of the phenomenon being investigated (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

1.16.2 Quantitative strategies as stage one

The paragraphs to follow focus on sampling, questionnaire used to produce quantitative data and its administration.

1.16.2.1 Sampling

Five Free State child guidance clinics were chosen as research sites. They all qualified as research participants in the study because of the nature of their work. All specialists working at the clinics had an equal chance of being included in the sample. Purposive sampling was found to be relevant for this study in order to answer research-critical questions. Participants were classified into groups according to their job descriptions. These groups were; psychologists, school social workers, special education specialists, remedial specialists (now called senior education specialists) and speech therapists. They differed according to their job specifications and size or “population parameters” (Du Plooy, 1995, p. 50). Not all members were reached as some were no longer based at the clinics because of restructuring in the districts due to the implementation of EWP6 (2001). In Child Guidance Clinic 1, they were N= 7; Child Guidance clinic 2, N= 6; Child Guidance clinic 3, N= 5; Child Guidance Clinic 4, N= 5 and Child Guidance Clinic 5, N= 10.

In total, 33 members took part as research participants. Clinics were not compared to each other, because the thesis is not experimental but observational. It attempts to investigate why Free State child guidance clinics still use the medical model for learner assessment instead of the ecosystem approach, especially in this era of inclusivity. The study also examines the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners.

1.16.2.2 Data production techniques

The data production approach enabled the researcher to have direct contact with the participants. The advantage of this approach is the richness of data and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Questionnaires were administered directly with the therapists to elicit relevant data.

1.16.2.3 Questionnaires

The questionnaire administered consisted of two sections. Section A was made up of five items on biographical details, generally assisting in developing a profile for each participant. Section B consisted of 11 items about psychological assessment and evaluation of learners, assessment tools and evaluation techniques used, rating of instruments in order of preference and selection criteria.

1.16.2.4 Administration of quantitative instruments

The researcher asked the research participants to answer the appropriate questions in the questionnaire by ticking a box, giving further explanation or choosing the block that best suited them (i.e. Very inappropriate, Inappropriate, Uncertain, Appropriate and Very appropriate) on a Likert scale. The instrument provided information about which tools were used, and understanding of the objectives of assessment.

1.16.3 Qualitative strategies as stage two

The paragraphs to follow focus on sampling and the interview schedule used to produce qualitative data.

1.16.3.1 Sampling

At the five Free State child guidance clinics, only 12 interviews were conducted with different specialists. The target population for this study was all clinics. Child guidance clinics were selected because they had relevant information needed to answer research questions. The Free State as a province was chosen because of economic reasons. Purposive sampling was found to be appropriate.

1.16.3.2 Interviews

Each participant was interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Participants were asked open-ended and where possible closed-ended questions related to the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners and inclusive education. Individual interviews were conducted in order to produce genuine primary data that would provide answers to my critical questions. All interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analysed to check for similarities and differences. Notes were also taken. The interview atmosphere was relaxed and informal unlike in the formal interview. Participants were free to express their understanding of the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation. Findings, discussions and interpretations are reported in Chapters 5 and 6.

1.17 THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

The research findings and conclusions explore the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context. The findings have been drawn from the evidence and experiences of specialists at the Free State child guidance clinics. The argument raised in this research is that if psychological assessment is used, it must only be for diagnostic purposes. This challenges policy makers and practitioners to revisit policy on psychological assessment of learners in schools. Inclusive education assessment can be seen as an emancipatory approach to learner assessment, unlike the medical approach. Learners will benefit from such an approach. This study lays the foundation for further research to be conducted on psychological assessment and inclusive education. The study further seeks to put together a relevant theoretical framework and methodology for understanding the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting in the Free State Department of Education in South Africa. Few studies have been conducted on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context. A lot of literature explains psychometric assessment in clinical settings and the workplace. Psychological assessment conducted in schools is dominated by psychological testing which is informed by the psychometric scientific assessment approach. When this study was conducted, there was considerable concern about the relevancy and validity of psychological tools and techniques used for the environmentally and academically disadvantaged learners.

The psychometric assessment approach has a generally negative effect on learners' academic performance and their lives, which leaves a gap between policy and the practice of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. This study seeks to investigate the relationship between policy and practice, perceptions of practitioners on the assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education system and the benefits that learners get. In the interviews it was indicated that the aims of psychological assessment were to place a learner in a special or remedial education programme or to allocate a clinic number to a learner so that the school can obtain a post. The study will contribute to knowledge production in the sense that practitioners in psychological evaluation need to revisit their psychological assessment procedures, because most of them have been schooled in the medical-positivistic model of assessment. There is also a need to revisit the assessment policies to ensure that all learners get a fair assessment and evaluation treatment which will help them improve their academic performance and their lives in general without being excluded.

The success of any policy depends on its interpretation and strategies for implementation, the readiness of implementers and their attitudes towards it. The literature survey has shown that there is a gap between policy formulation and practice. When this study was conducted, many people indicated that they were still grappling with the understanding and contextualisation of EWP6 (2001). Nothing had changed yet; therapists were still assessing learners just like before. Policy formulation therefore does not necessarily translate into practice. Less attention had been devoted on monitoring the successes and failures of the policy.

1.18 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

To fully understand what this thesis is all about, it is essential to give succinct operational definitions of these key concepts which are used throughout the thesis.

1.18.1 Assessment

Assessment is the process of gathering information about students – what they know and can do. There are many ways to gather this information; for example, by observing students as they learn, examining what they produce, or assessing their knowledge and skills (DoE, 2002).

1.18.2 Psychological assessment

According to Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 4), “Psychological assessment is a process-orientated activity whereby we gather a wide array of information by using assessment measures (tests) and information from many other sources (e.g. interviews, a person’s history, collateral sources). We then evaluate and integrate all this information to reach a conclusion or make a decision”. Shore, Brice and Love (1992, p. 33) concur and add: “Psychological assessment is the procedure whereby a psychologist gathers information about a person in an attempt to answer some questions about behaviour, emotions, personality, or cognitive (intellectual) abilities.”

1.18.3 Psychological testing

Testing is a means of assessment. A test is simply a measuring instrument used to document student learning. Since the end of World War II, however, testing has dominated the assessment and evaluation industry. Assessors rely on indirect psychological measures or intelligence tests to estimate the intelligence of individuals. Intelligence tests only sample behaviours that are associated with intelligence. Such a sampling only provides an assumption about the child’s intellectual abilities. It is unjust and unethical to use the test assumption to predict the future intellectual ability of a child or place him/her in a particular programme (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1991). Urbina (2004, p. 1) says: “A psychological test is a systematic procedure for obtaining samples of behaviour, relevant to cognitive or affective functioning, and for scoring and evaluating those samples according to standards.”

1.18.4 Psychological evaluation

Evaluation is the process of interpreting and making judgments about assessment information. By itself, assessment data is neither good nor bad. It simply mirrors what is going on in the classroom. This information becomes meaningful only when we decide that it reflects something that we value, such as how well a student has mastered a long division. The key question in evaluation is: Are students learning what we want them to learn? Van der Horst and McDonald (1997, p. 168) state: “the word ‘evaluate’: e-value-ate means putting a value to something – deciding on the worth of something”.

1.18.5 Intelligence

It is difficult to arrive at a widely acceptable definition of intelligence that is both precise and useful. Psychologists have shown little agreement in their definitions of intelligence and how it should be measured. This complicates efforts to understand the concept of cognitive functioning and also makes it difficult to build theories or construct procedures and methods to measure intelligence (Eysenck, 1988, in Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001, p. 178; Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001, p. 20). Intelligence is a construct, not a thing. It makes more sense to try to specify what an intelligent person does, than to try to decide what intelligence is. Intelligence cannot be defined strictly in terms of one type of behaviour, but should rather be defined in terms of a variety of behaviours that pose cognitive demands. Thus a test that includes only one type of content, such as a vocabulary test, is not likely to represent an adequate measure of intelligence.

1.18.6 Inclusive education

More recently, the term inclusion has been used to describe the education of students with disabilities in general education settings. Although many definitions have been used to describe *inclusion*, the term is generally taken to mean that students with disabilities are served primarily in the general education classroom, under the responsibility of the general classroom teacher. In addition to mainstreaming and inclusion, the term full inclusion is also used, referring to the practice of serving students with disabilities and other special needs entirely within the general classroom. In full-inclusion settings, all students with disabilities are served the entire day in the general classroom, although special education teachers and other personnel may also be present in the general classroom at times (Mastropieri & Scruggs, n.d.).

1.19 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This research report is divided into six major parts. The first part is mainly theoretical (Chapters 1-3). The second part (Chapter 4) discusses methodologies employed to gather and analyse data. The third part (Chapters 5 and 6) analyses, discusses and interprets data and results in the context of Chapters 1 to 3. The last part (Chapter 7) concludes the research by way of emphasising the major findings, clarifying some, making recommendations and suggesting areas for possible future research in the context of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education system.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the whole study. The emphasis here is on: (i) The background and context of the problem. In discussing this aspect, the chapter shows the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context. It also states factors that play a role during assessment and evaluation of learners. (ii) The statement of the problem is then discussed, focusing on the purpose of the research, its focus, justification and definition of key concepts. (iii) The review of related literature is conducted to show the disciplines from which this study emerges. Among others the theoretical framework informing this thesis is discussed and it is shown how it is based on the literature reviewed. Major points from the literature that form the theoretical framework in this study are discussed. Justification is given for the use of the theoretical framework and how it is theorised. (iv) The research design and methodology employed to gather and analyse data at two stages are discussed. (v) Finally, the relative importance of the research is highlighted.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 defines and discusses the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners and inclusive education as central concepts in this research. These concepts are also related to the theory informing the framework in this research. The historical origin and aims of psychological assessment and evaluation are also discussed.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 defines and discusses inclusive education assessment. This concept is discussed as a response to the medical discourse on learner assessment and evaluation. The chapter also looks at published literature informing inclusive education assessment. Reference is made to inclusive education assessment as defined in EWP6 (2001). The relationship between inclusive education assessment, curriculum and the theory informing this study is also described.

Chapter 4

The research design and methodologies used to gather and analyse data are discussed, including the stages of the research. The first stage discusses the operationalisation of quantitative strategies while the second discusses the qualitative strategies.

Reasons for using an integrated approach are also advanced, highlighting the strong points and limitations of both types of strategy. The discussion includes identification of the instruments and samples used in both stages as well as the analytical procedures. The reasons for choosing the identified instruments are given and their nature explained.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 presents, analyses, discusses and interprets the quantitative data gathered through the two instruments employed. The structured questionnaire for the therapists was an instrument which focused on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The second instrument used was a file analysis of learners referred for psychological intervention, with the focus on tests used during assessment. An indication is given as to how instruments were used and data gathered. The conclusions which are drawn based on statistical findings are those of therapists and file analysis.

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, qualitative data is presented, analysed, discussed and interpreted. Data was collected through open-ended interviews. Actual words and conversations of the research participants constituted evidence of the conclusions drawn about them. At every stage of analysis, conclusions and interpretations are made which are related to the concepts developed in Chapters 2 and 3, and the findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 restates the hypothesis and shows how the findings in Chapters 5 and 6 confirm this hypothesis. Conclusions covering the entire research study are drawn and recommendations on the use of psychological intervention in an inclusive education context are discussed. Finally, suggestions for future research are presented. All these are insulated within the humanistic ecosystem theoretic approach to learner support and development.

1.20 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Chapter 1 has in a concise manner exposed the background and context that gave rise to this research. The connections between the major operational concepts, namely psychological assessment and inclusive education, have been highlighted.

The other point discussed in this chapter was the ecosystem theory along side with the medical discourse on learner assessment. These two theoretical discourses are shown to be among those from which the exclusion/inclusion of learners through psychological intervention is understood. Furthermore, this chapter has briefly discussed the problem that constitutes the concerns and purpose of the thesis. The theoretical framework within which this research is conducted has been discussed and justified. The research design and methodology showing how this research was conducted are also elaborated upon. The research questions, hypothesis, the relative importance of this study as well as its structure are also stated. Chapter 2 discusses the literature on psychological assessment and evaluation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. A literature review on these concepts has been done to ensure that one does not merely duplicate other previous studies. It was also conducted to find out what are the most widely accepted definitions of key concepts, empirical findings in the field of study, and authoritative theorising about the subject on hand (Johnson & Christensen 2000, p. 41; Mouton, 2001, p. 87). Psychological assessment and evaluation is too broad that it would be impossible for this study to cover all aspects. The study therefore focuses on the aims and uses of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting. There is a disjuncture between psychological assessment and evaluation, and inclusive education practices. This is not surprising as inclusive education is still in its infancy, especially in South Africa. Our country is in an era of transformation after the 1994 transition from the apartheid regime to democracy, which brought about a number of changes. It soon became evident that educational policies must be reviewed in order to meet the needs of all learners. Among others, the policy on learner psychological assessment had to be reviewed.

Political changes in South Africa gave birth to the formulation of a new constitution which is grounded on the principles of democracy, equity, non-discrimination and respect for the rights and dignity of all. The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996) embodies the principles of the Constitution by asserting the rights of all learners to equal access to basic quality and equality education (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001, p. 10). Among the policies that were formulated because of political changes was Education White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education (2001). The DoE (2001, p. 27) states:

In order for the Ministry to establish an inclusive education and training system, it will review all existing policies and legislation for general, further and higher education and training so that these will be consistent with the policy proposals put forward in EWP6 (2001). The Ministry will require all advisory bodies to provide it with advice on how to implement the policy proposals contained in EWP6 (2001).

In the paragraphs to follow, attention is focused on different policy discourses and legislation and how they influenced and shaped the use of psychological intervention and advocated for education for all irrespective of learning barriers in education.

2.2 POLICY DISCOURSE IN SOUTH AFRICA IN RELATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

2.2.1 Education White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education – building an inclusive education and training system

People understand and interpret this policy document differently and there are many misconceptions about what inclusive education entails. According to DoE (2001, p. 16), inclusive education and training acknowledges that all children and young people can learn and that they need support. It accepts and respects the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued. It is about meeting the needs of all learners, through enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies together with changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment. Inclusive education encourages the empowerment of learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning. A flexible assessment policy must be in place that is accessible to all learners, irrespective of the nature of their learning needs (DoE 2001).

Assessment methods and techniques should be such that they do not create a barrier to learning and development. Assessment initiatives will be required to focus on the inclusion of the full range of diverse learning needs. District-based support teams will give support to schools in the form of learning support materials and assessment instruments. Assessment and interventions during the early phases of life is needed. Community-based clinics in conjunction with government departments are best positioned to conduct this initial assessment. Assessment processes will address barriers to learning and current policies and practices will be reviewed and revised to ensure that the needs of all learners are acknowledged and addressed. Criteria are needed for the revision of existing policies and legislation for all bands of education and training, and frameworks for governance and organisation. Policies, legislation and frameworks for the school and college systems must provide the basis for overcoming the causes and effects of barriers to learning.

Admission policies will be revised so that learners who can be accommodated outside of special schools and specialised settings can be accommodated within designated full-service or other schools and settings (DoE, 2001, p. 25, 27, 31-33). The implementation of an inclusive education policy compels schools to amend their school policies. Among the subsections affected are those dealing with cultural and social aspects. Frederickson and Cline (2002, p. 154-155) say schools will have to be informed of and be aware of the systemic issues associated with cases referred to them for services. They will have to be knowledgeable about institutional racism, cultural misinformation and other systemic issues affecting the education of students from culturally and linguistically diverse populations. They will have to provide advice and support to develop systems interventions to support the educational success of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. When working with racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse groups of children and their families, they will have an ethical and professional responsibility to assess whether problems presumed to reside within a learner may be manifestations of systemic biases in the institution(s) serving that learner. In this way they will rule out systemic factors as causal influences in the learner's situation before proceeding with individually focused assessment or intervention.

Schools will have to ensure that the assessments in which they are involved comprise a comprehensive process of gathering information about learners that explicitly takes account of the impact of socio-cultural, environmental, political, experiential, and language-based factors. When conducting an assessment, they will take into account language and other behaviours considered socially appropriate in the culture of a learner. Recognition of the limitations of standardised instruments and the ramifications of using such instruments in the assessment of racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse learners will also be considered.

2.2.2 Policy on education for all

The American Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Public Law 94-142, endorses the protection of learners from discriminatory psychological assessment practices by stating that:

All children have a right to basic education irrespective of a disability. Testing, evaluation materials and also assessment methods should be carefully selected and correctly administered so as not to be culturally or racially discriminatory.

The Law also requires that assessment records must remain confidential except to those who are concerned with the education of a child. It also requires that handicapped children be educated with those who are not handicapped in as normal an environment as possible. It further states that support services like psychological intervention, audiologists, occupational and speech therapy, and social workers must be in place to assist learners (Witt, Elliot, Gresham & Kramer, 1988, p. 22).

This policy gives the right to handicapped learners to be educated with those who are said not to be handicapped. According to this policy, testing should consider the cultural background of a learner. This resonates well with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which states:

Every learner has a right to basic education and that the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on the basis of race, gender ... ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, belief, culture, language, ... including psychological assessment.

Regarding the implementation of inclusive education in schools, Unesco (1994) held a World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in Spain in 1994. At this conference the concept of inclusive schools was put on the international agenda. The conference proclamation became known as the Salamanca Statement. It proclaims that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are:

...the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

The Salamanca Statement also proposes major school reforms, the ones which encourage inclusion of all learners irrespective of disability, race, cultural background or mental ability. According to Unesco (1994), inclusive schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of learners, accommodate them regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have, and that the state should offer a continuum of support services to develop inclusive schools. Current and emerging education legislation and policy in South Africa reflect the commitment of the South African government to address the diversity in the learner population and provide such a continuum of support.

It looks at learning barriers as not only emanating from within a learner but also from the socio-cultural environment. The Salamanca Statement is unequivocal in asserting that inclusion is a right, a right that appears to be *universal*, seeing the creation of inclusive schools as part of the creation of an inclusive society. More often than not a curriculum favours certain forms of knowledge over others and is often discriminatory on the basis of race, class and gender. The impact of the dominant society and culture is inscribed in a whole range of school practices, for example, the official language, school rules, classroom social relations, the selection and presentation of school knowledge and, the exclusion of certain cultural capital (Giroux, 1983, p. 66).

2.2.3 Draft National Strategy on screening, identification, assessment and support

The current identification and assessment of learners for additional support in our country is faced with a number of challenges. There are legislative discrepancies in terms of how learners should be admitted to public schools. South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996, p.5) states that “The governing body of a public school may not administer any test related to the admission of a learner to a public school, direct or authorise the principal of the school or any other person to administer such test” but the current organisation of special schools according to category of disability still leads to contravention of this Act. The widespread and iniquitous use of norm-referenced psychometric tests that are culturally biased is still a problem. In spite of the developmental, inclusive approach to learner assessment and support, there are still assessment practices which encourage the referral of learners with mild and moderate support needs to special settings instead of being accommodated in their local neighbourhood schools.

Limited access to special services or facilities (special schools) leads to a situation where children who have been evaluated and identified as being in need of additional support to be marginalised and excluded rather than supported in current mainstream settings, especially those in deep rural areas. Some assessment practices prevent learners with severe and multiple disabilities from being admitted to special schools. The entrenchment of the current inequitable funding situation through inappropriate assessment procedures and a lack of control over who accesses special schools create yet other problems. There is limited access to specialised support staff for learners in poor and rural environments. Poor screening and identification of basic needs such as the need for assistive devices and psycho-social support, and the lack of tracking and follow-up once needs have been identified remain a problem.

There seems to be a lack of interdepartmental and intersectoral coordination of early intervention services for learners. Cost-ineffective and inappropriate application of the expertise of specialised support staff such as psychologists and therapists working within the education system aggravates the situation. There is also a disjuncture between the practices of support staff appointed within the education system and those who are in private practice. The current assessment practices and referral system lead to a situation where learners who experience barriers to learning are excluded from accessing the curriculum (DoE, 2005, p. 4-5).

In so far as the use of psychometric assessment is concerned; the policy document makes it clear that the need for group and individual diagnostic assessment will be kept to the minimum. Especially in view of the negative and discriminatory effects and limited benefits of norm-referenced psychometric assessment as conducted in the previous system, schools are no longer allowed to organise for or request such an assessment to be undertaken for any learner who needs additional support. The need to involve any professional from outside the school premises to diagnose the intrinsic barriers of a learner is reduced, especially if such a person does not have insight into the teaching and learning environment of a learner.

The role of psychologists and therapists working within the education system will be revised to be in line with EWP6 (2001) and there will be an emphasis on mentoring, consultation, monitoring, and programme development. Training and upgrading of qualifications of psychologists is key at initial Professional Development Level as well as Continued Professional Development Level, to work within the new framework. Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning are the central objectives of screening, identification and assessment (DoE, 2005, p. 4-5; 16-17 & 28). Through EWP6 (2001), the department of education hopes to improve the situation around assessment and evaluation of learners.

2.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Different sources make a distinction between psychological assessment and evaluation. Some sources use the concepts interchangeably but for the purpose of this study, one is the extension of the other. For instance, psychological evaluation means more than psychological assessment. Psychological evaluation becomes an extension of psychological assessment in the sense that it is the process of “interpreting” and “making judgments” about assessment information (Macintosh & Sieborger, 2002, p. 5-6).

Psychological assessment on the other hand is more about objectively describing a person through the use of standardised psychological instruments or techniques. This study also shows a relationship between assessment, evaluation and testing, which will subsequently be discussed. Psychological assessment and evaluation are crucial and debatable issues during this period of technological advancement and transformation, not only in South Africa, but worldwide. Psychological assessment and evaluation in South African schools has been under severe criticism since 1994. There have been different conceptualisations of the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in our schools from different people and organisations. The practices of psychological assessment and evaluation should be relevant to the educational and social needs of learners.

All stakeholders must be involved before, during and after the assessment process. It is imperative that when psychological assessment and evaluation of learners is conducted, information must be collected from various sources to make accurate and informed decisions (see alternative methods of assessment and theories of multiple intelligence). For instance, to diagnose a learner with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), one needs information from teachers, parents, psychological tests measuring the disorder and from a psychologist (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 99). Having collected information from various sources, it is still possible that an error of measurement has occurred. This is called “assessment error”. Johnson and Christensen further (2000) say error in the assessment process refers to “the fact that the scores obtained in any assessment are influenced by variables other than the trait or characteristic being assessed”. For example, if one is trying to assess a student’s intelligence by giving them an intelligence test, the IQ score obtained on the test would be a result of these person’s actual intellectual level plus a variety of other factors, such as how tired they were when they took the test, or whether they were physically sick or experiencing some interpersonal difficulty. Such variables determine the score obtained from the assessment and introduce “error” into the assessment.

The greater the amount of error, the more inaccurate psychological assessment is. Indeed, the South African education system needs a psychological evaluation support system which is developmental and takes care of the needs of learners. Psychological assessment should reveal the weaknesses and the strengths of learners and suggest a developmental plan of action. Assessors, including therapists, should move away from a judgemental deficit assessment approach to a learner-centred approach. The latter approach compels therapists to change their scope of operation and become “consultants”.

2.3.1 Psychological assessment

Psychological assessment is a process-orientated activity whereby a wide array of psychological information is collected using psychological assessment measures like psychological tests, and information from other sources such as clinical interviews, the person's history and behavioural observation as well as collateral sources. The information is then evaluated, integrated and conclusions or decisions are made (Foxcroft & Roodt), 2001, p. 4; Cohen, Swerdlik & Smith 1992, p. 11). A number of issues arise when one discusses the psychological assessment process, such as the issue of the referral process. Several factors influence the referral process. In the referral process sometimes it happens that the reason for referral is usually not clearly specified. This then leads to misinterpretation of the reason for referral and incorrect assessment. Assessors need to be very skilled in uncovering hidden agendas; vocabulary used, dynamics, expectations, and gets more information from various sources in the referral procedure (Groth-Marnat, 2003, p. 31).

Engelbrecht et al. (1999, p. 100) say, "Assessment is not just about testing, but tests may form a valuable addition to the process of assessment. It is clear that all assessments have elements of measurement and evaluation but what is now emphasised is the positive aspect, namely the essential linking of a diagnostic aspect with classroom curricula and the growth and development of learners". This means that psychological assessment should enhance good quality of teaching and learning, to enable learners to realise their potentialities. Such an approach would be in line with the principles of an inclusive education philosophy which promotes learner support and development. Psychological intervention is one of the essential components of quality education in the transformation of the education system in South Africa.

The aim of psychological assessment should be to locate the weak points of a learner and map out a plan of action. Such an assessment benefits those learners who are culturally and educationally disadvantaged or those who experience barriers to learning and development. Psychological assessment is a very broad concept. It is not the intention of this study to deal with every aspect of psychological assessment. Its focus is on the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting. Engelbrecht et al., (1999) asserted that what is being assessed by psychological measures is just a sample of human behaviour. In education, it then becomes imperative to look critically at the aims of the psychological assessment of learners and how it affects their learning.

In the past, if a learner was not making satisfactory progress at school, he/she would be referred to a therapist like a psychologist, social worker, speech or occupational therapist or a medical practitioner for intervention. Such a learner would then be classified according to the assessment results and sometimes sent to special programmes like remedial or special education. Psychological assessment can be difficult to understand properly because it is a most complex and constantly changing field that affects so many areas of our lives and has such far-reaching consequences. To try and address the issue of psychological assessment (testing), a number of suggestions are made. Testing should be based on three broad principles, which have the support and consensus from the professional community. The first one is equity, which means that there should be no undue privileging of any specific group on the basis of gender, resources, culture, language or race. Secondly, redress, that is, testing should take place with a view to improving self-knowledge.

Lastly, access which means that examinees being tested in their second language should be evaluated more flexibly. More time should be allocated for second language learners where indicated (Maree, 2003, p. 93). Psychological assessment should be tailored to suit the needs of all learners. Parents should be a valued source of assessment information, as well as equal partners in the evaluation process and design of the intervention plan. Children's prior experience and achievements should be included and celebrated. Psychological assessment should aim at establishing a holistic view of the competencies, strengths, assets and areas of difficulties of a learner (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2004. p. 326). Psychological assessment should thus benefit a learner and should be multidimensional. All relevant stakeholders in the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners must be given equal status, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

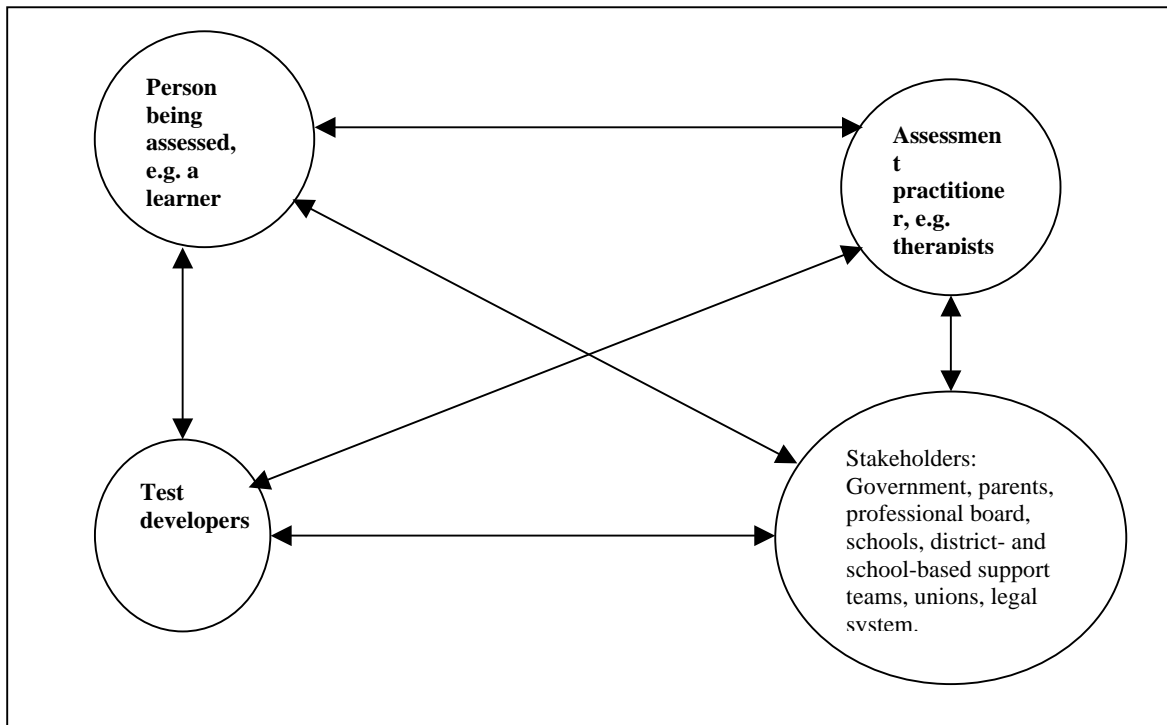


Figure 2.1 A multiple constituency model of psychological assessment (adapted from Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001, p. 123)

Figure 2.1 shows that the mutual relationship between different stakeholders who have vested interests in assessment is indispensable. Assessment should benefit the assessed, e.g. a learner. Psychological tests can be correctly administered through trained personnel like psychologists, or through psychometrics. The South African government, professional boards and other relevant bodies regulate the use of psychological tools and techniques for the benefit of the assessed. In an inclusive education setting, it is important to caution assessors about the aims of psychological assessment. Any psychological assessment procedure in an inclusive education setting should aim at supporting and developing a learner's potential.

A number of assumptions prevail about psychological characteristics which have been said to be assessed. Some of these characteristics, for example anxiety, motivation, shyness and aggressiveness, do exist. In psychological assessment, these characteristics can be measured and numbers be assigned to show their strengths and weaknesses. A number of tools or techniques can be used to measure a particular characteristic. It is also assumed that assessment tools can be used to provide answers to life's most momentous questions. In an ecosystem discourse (see Chapter 4), which resonates well with inclusive education, assessment tools become useful only for diagnosis purposes, for instance to pinpoint an area which needs further attention so that the correct decisions can be made.

However, in assessment there is always an “error” of assessment. No tool or technique is absolute; they all have their own strengths and weaknesses. Assessment results should say something about a learner’s behaviour outside the testing environment. It is believed that results can be used to predict future behaviour and performance. Testing and assessment can be conducted in a fair and unbiased manner depending on the person using it. In South Africa, the situation relating to the classification, possession, control and use of psychological tests and other devices used for assessing individuals is strictly regulated by legislation. The use of psychological assessment tools and techniques is regulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the Professional Board for Psychology (Mauer, 2000). Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 27-28) and Van de Vijver and Rothman (2004, p. 1) say: “Regulation of the use of psychological tests was to ensure that learners are not discriminated against because of tests results. By law in South Africa, no learner can be denied the opportunity of learning because of his/her disability.

All learners have a right to quality education.” The Minister of Education in 1996 committed himself to ensuring that the doors of learning were opened to all by instituting the National Commission on Special Needs in Education Training (NCSNET) and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services. According to Mda and Mothata (2000, p.5), “The focus of the investigation was on the development of education to ensure that the system becomes more responsive to the diverse needs of learners.” As the recommendations of the NCSNET and the NCESS were to transform special education needs, so should psychological intervention be transformed to improve the education of all learners. The Department of Education states that no child may be discriminated against or denied the opportunity to learn in any school in South Africa because of his/her disability or psychological evaluation results (DoE, 2001).

2.3.1.1 The history of psychological assessment – an international perspective

According to Wetzler (1989, p. 5), “Psychological assessment was first introduced over 50 years ago by Herman Rorschach and Henry Murray and subsequently systematised and expanded during the 1950s by David Rapaport and David Shakow.” It developed during the era of scientific development, of which psychology was a part. During this era, Thorndike postulated that “whatever exists, exists in some amount and that whatever exists in some amount can be measured”. As far as psychological assessment is concerned; Thorndike’s statement implies that all human traits can be measured. I found this to be erroneous; for example, how does one measure the beliefs of people in a particular culture?

The measurement of human traits that Thorndike suggested means that the human psyche can be quantified. This is misleading and relegates a human being to the status of an object. Human beings are dynamic; they change from time to time. Thorndike's suggested measurement of human traits necessitated the development of psychological assessment instruments. It is said that assessment measures were informed by theories of human behaviour, but the literature was not quite clear on which theories of human behaviour and how relevant they were for informing the development of assessment measures. Statistical methods were also developed to analyse data obtained from measurement instruments. The approach to psychological assessment was positivistic and scientific. As time went on, there was an improvement in the use of psychology in clinical, educational, military and industrial settings. Psychological instruments had to be administered under controlled conditions. This is one reason why psychological assessment is said to be scientific in approach, because it uses scientific methods in its procedures.

Psychological assessment was used during the twentieth century for the treatment of emotional disorders and mentally challenged and handicapped people. The aim of psychological assessment was to provide these people with educational opportunities. However, the tests simply meant that such people were not like others and could not be educated in the same educational institution. A number of psychological tests were developed in the US and the United Kingdom and eventually used in other countries as well. It stands to reason that the tests were biased against other cultural groups. From the late 1950s to 1970s, psychological tests started to fall into disfavour with psychologists and the bigger community. In countries like the US, Sweden and Denmark the use of psychological tests was banned. The general dissatisfaction with the tests and their bias revealed a need for culturally fair tests. During the eighties and nineties the focus in the use of psychological tests was on cross-cultural test adaptation (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001, p. 16- 20).

2. 3.1.2 The aims of psychological assessment in the old era

In the past, the basic function of psychological assessment in schools in South Africa was to find out what was wrong with a learner. This approach was similar to the medical deficit assessment approach. The aim of the medical approach in learner assessment in schools was to determine the disability category of a learner. Norm reference assessment was used by health specialist in schools (Lehmann and Mehrens, 1991). At the end of the psychological assessment process, a learner would be assigned to a special educational programme like special or remedial education, or education for the gifted.

Such an assessment system resulted in a dual education system, i.e. special education and mainstream education (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001). This psychological assessment system also discriminated along racial lines. File analysis in this study showed that there were more black learners than any other racial group who were referred to the Free State child guidance clinics for psychological assessment. The analysis also showed that the majority of these learners were recommended for either “special education or support teaching” (see table 5.5). According to the assessment results, that meant that more black learners were of inferior “intelligence” than those in other groups. This was one form of racial discrimination. In such a scenario, psychometric assessment was used to prove that certain races were more “intelligent” than others. Education resources would then be allocated on the basis of mental ability according to the assessment results. This created many educational imbalances in South Africa (Nzimande, 1995).

Against this background, I support the pioneers of inclusive education and the psychological assessment approach which is accommodative of learners’ needs. This calls for revisiting the aims of psychological assessment and the transformation of psychological assessment policies. It will be very difficult for assessors to do their work in an inclusive education system if psychological assessment policies have not been revised. Psychological assessment policies therefore need to be in line with the learners’ needs and the demands of the education system. There needs to be synergy between psychological assessment policies and practices. This study calls for a change of the scope of psychological assessment in schools and the role of the therapists in an inclusive education setting.

2.3.1.3 Aims of psychological assessment in the new dispensation

In the inclusive education system, the aim of assessment is to identify barriers to learning, pointing out where and how they could be addressed in order to promote effective teaching and learning (DoE, 2002, p. 107). This means that the use of psychological assessment in schools should help improve teaching and learning, if used at all. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 2-3) see the new purpose of psychological assessment as “to identify strengths and weaknesses, map development or progress, identify training and education needs, or assist in making a diagnosis. It can be used to identify intervention and therapy needs and measure the effectiveness of an intervention programme.” In such a scenario psychological assessment becomes developmental in nature.

Different education policies that call for equity, social justice, quality education and education for all, have created a space for a drastic move away from a Eurocentric, individualistic approach to a supportive, developmental and holistic psychological assessment approach. Educational psychologists and other therapists in education have the responsibility of knitting psychological assessment practices into the curriculum and using it to construct an enabling environment for all learners to learn. The introduction of inclusive education has challenged educational psychologists and other therapists to rethink their scope of practice in order to meet the needs of learners. Engelbrecht (2004, p. 1) concurs with the above statement when saying:

The challenges related to the changing nature of education in South Africa and the relationship of these challenges to the past, and particularly to the problems of apartheid, have forced educational psychologists to reconsider their scope of practice in order to respond to the needs of their clients. Contextual demands have required a shift from the traditional child-deficit, medical model towards an ecological and multi-systems paradigm, suggesting a wider scope of analysis and action.

This means that therapists need to consider not only the IQ score of a learner, but the potential that he/she has.

2.3.1.4 History of the use of psychological assessment in South Africa

The birth of the democratic South African dispensation resulted in a number of changes, concerns and developments. Concerns included the use of psychological assessment and evaluation in social, industrial and educational settings. Psychological assessment and evaluation in South Africa during the apartheid regime was discriminatory in nature and supported the policies of separate development and poor education, especially for black learners. Since 1994, there has been a strong resistance to the use of psychological tests in schools. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 27) state:

With a growing resistance to assessment measures and the ruling African Nationalist Congress' (ANC) express purpose to focus on issues of equity so as to redress past imbalances, the use of tests in industry and education in particular has been placed under the spotlight. School readiness testing as well as the routine administration of group tests in schools, was banned in many provinces as such testing was seen as being exclusionary and perpetuating the discriminatory policies of the past.

In South Africa, one not uncommonly observes the language culture scenario of an English- or Afrikaans-speaking psychologist administering an English psychological assessment procedure to a black African Nguni-speaking learner who is not competent in English. The psychological tests used in South Africa were imported from abroad around 1900s. Such tests were biased against the South African community, especially the black community. Psychological testing in South Africa was originally developed to be used with the Afrikaans- and English-speaking population and excluded the African group which comprised the largest population (Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2004, p. 2). Historically disadvantaged groups in South Africa had been discriminated against as far as the use of psychological assessment is concerned. These groups were unfamiliar with the material used in psychological tests and counselling techniques. Psychological tests tend to assess different constructs from those for whom tests had been designed and standardised. In the standardisation process, not all population groups were represented as one would expect in a multicultural country like South Africa (Abrahams & Mauer, 1999, p. 76). Foxcroft and Roodt (2001: p. 22) say:

Psychological assessment in South Africa developed in an environment characterised by the unequal distribution of resources based on racial categories (blacks, coloureds, Indians, and whites). Almost inevitably, the development of psychological assessment reflected the racially segregated society in which it evolved. Any account of the history of psychological assessment in South Africa needs to point out the profound impact that apartheid policies had on test development and use. Major trends that characterised early developments in psychological assessment in South Africa are firstly that tests were only standardised on and for whites. Secondly, biased norms were used on groups of which the tests were not intended for. Lastly, hasty and biased conclusions were reached about test results which served to perpetuate the cycle of misuse of these test results that sought to reaffirm skewed notions of certain racial groups.

The development and use of tests were regulated by different bodies in South Africa. The National Institute of Personnel Research (NIPR) was responsible for the production of psychological tests in South Africa and the Institute for Psychological and Edumetric Research (IPER) developed measures for education and clinical practice. In 1984, the NIPR and IPER were transformed into the Human Sciences Research Council. A number of tests produced by the NIPR were used for populations for which they were not standardised, viz. the black population. These tests were used to determine the work suitability and mental ability of a number of people.

Most unfortunately, many of those assessment tools are still being used even today. Foxcroft et al. in Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 26) noted that “notes, statements cautioning against the interpretation of results when such tools are used merely served to ease practitioners' consciences and lulled them into a sense that they were doing the best they could with the few tools at their disposal”. The HSRC is now responsible for the development of psychological tests that suit the South African contexts. It has developed many tests, which may be used for a number of purposes in schools, tertiary institutions and the private sector. Having said this, there is still a shortage of culturally fair tests that can be used in a multicultural society like South Africa (Owen, 1998, p. 87).

There is a perception that for years South African psychologists were responsible for devising psychological tests that were used to screen out learners, especially blacks learners, from educational opportunities (Burnette, 1994, p. 8). Black learners would be tested for the purpose of excluding or depriving them from better educational opportunities. Many of them have been unfairly sent to special education through the use of psychological tests. According to psychologists and psychometrics, the tests proved that black learners could not make satisfactory progress in mainstream education. One question that can be asked about the assessment of black learners is how the assessments dealt with issues like fairness, language and bias. For many years, the HSRC was seen as the pro-apartheid think-tank. Tests produced by this body supported the principles of the apartheid regime.

Many of these tests were constructed on racial bases, which perpetuated racial discrimination and segregation. Hence, testing in South Africa has been fundamentally shaped by apartheid. What is needed is a kind of internal “truth commission”, as part of a scholarly examination of the validity of testing itself. This is even more important given the fact that psychometrics is notorious for its refusal to question the social foundations of its paradigm. Psychological assessment in South Africa developed within the context of national, racial and gender oppression. No matter how much psychologists might have thought they were practicing their “science” of testing, the fact is that this was not possible in a society that could be characterised as “unethical”. The Constitution and the democratic government are committed to affirmative action as an instrument for redressing past historical imbalances. We should therefore pose the question as to whether psychometric development in South Africa is able to grapple with this new reality. The key question facing psychometrics is the analysis of the meaning of affirmative action for psychological assessment.

The implication of the Reconstruction and Development Programme for psychological assessment is that the country is now prioritising human resources development and affirmative action. Psychological assessment will have to look at *potential* and not just actual, existing skills in assessing people's capabilities (Owen 1998, in Nzimande, 1995, p. 108-109).

2.3.1. 5 Criticism of psychological tests

Psychologists use formal standardised psychological tests in formal settings which are different from learners' social milieu. This might be the cause of some learners scoring low in these tests. It is then always important to consider assessment error when assessing learners. These tests are the most problematic assessment tools when used with young children (Unisa, 1997, p.244; Cavallaro & Haney, 1999, p. 116). A lot of criticism has been levelled against the use of psychological tests in schools but in spite of that the empirical research conducted in this study shows that therapists feel that psychological tests can still be used to assess learners but not to refer them to specialised separate education settings like special education programme. They believe that tests like Reading and spelling tests can be used for diagnostic purposes. According to them they are very good indicators of where the level of a learner is and how to support him or her. Owen (1998) says: Nzimande (1995, p.108-109), in a paper he presented at a psychometrics conference launched the following attack on testing in South Africa:

- *...testing in South Africa has been fundamentally shaped by apartheid. This therefore begs the question as to whether this basic paradigm has changed significantly;*
- *What is needed is a kind of internal "truth commission", as part of a scholarly examination of the validity of testing itself. This is even more important given the fact that psychometrics is notorious for its refusal to question the social foundations of its paradigm;*
- *The implications of a bill of rights for psychological testing are far-reaching. Testing in South Africa developed within the context of national, racial and gender oppression. No matter how much psychologists might have thought they were practicing their "science" of testing..., the fact of the matter is that this was not possible in a society that could be characterised as "unethical";*
- *The constitution and government are committed to affirmative action as an instrument to redress past historical imbalances. We should therefore pose the question as to whether psychometric development in South Africa is able to grapple with this new reality.*

The key question facing psychometrics is the analysis of the meaning of affirmative action for testing;

- *The implication of the “Reconstruction Development Program’ for testing is that the country is now prioritising human resources development and affirmative action.*
- *Testing will have to look at potential and not just actually existing skills in assessing people’s capabilities.*

Nzimande (1995) raised issues that put a challenge to psychology as a profession in as far as transformation of psychological evaluation is concerned. Psychological assessment uses norm-referenced approach which is characterised by standardised test procedures such as the intelligence test. Cohen and Spenciner (1994, p.64) say, “A norm-referenced test compares a child’s performance with that of similar children who have taken the same test.” This approach fails to acknowledge that factors which influence learner’s performance on tests differ from one learner to another. It is unfair and makes no logic to compare one learner to another. Because these tests are designed to be used in different schools, they tend to provide broad coverage of competencies and abilities. Thus, close inspection of the objectives and types of test items is needed to determine how well the test matches the emphasis in the local curriculum (Mc Millan, 1997: 79-80). In the Free State department of education tests that are used in child guidance clinics hardly match the curriculum and do not necessary give guidelines on how to improve curriculum instruction in order to support learners.

Other problems that affect the practice of psychological assessment in South Africa are:

- *a lack of finances*
- *the fact that few professionals are motivated to conduct the research and development needed to develop new measures*
- *the fact that a higher priority is being placed on making other changes, and a small test market in South Africa* Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 136).

Testing and assessment of human beings is so complex because human beings are dynamic, they change from time to time and factors affecting their behaviour are enormous. These assumptions have theoretical underpinnings. For example, that measured characteristics can be quantified shows a positivistic theoretical understanding. This means that in psychometric testing the behaviour of a human being assumes the status of a number.

Assessment and evaluation of human beings according to the developmental approach and eco-systemic assessment reject this notion. According to these two approaches, assessment and evaluation of learners must consider that human beings are dynamic beings and that their behaviours are influenced by a number of factors. Psychometric assessment is too positivistic while developmental and eco-systemic assessments are humanistic and holistic. On the other hand, the fact that there are assumptions which state that a variety of tools and techniques must be used, that no tool is absolute and that there is always an assessment error shows that there is development on psychological assessment and evaluation, although it is slow. Johnson and Christensen (2000, p.97) say, "Educational researchers engage in a variety of procedures in an attempt to obtain measures of characteristics that are often considered subjective and difficult to assess, such as personality. Measuring these characteristics involves both testing and assessment. The distinction between testing and assessment is often somewhat ambiguous and has been slow in development."

In an eco-systemic approach to the evaluation of learners the use of psychological tests together with other techniques like clinical interviews, social and scholastic background is seen as a valid assessment procedure. It is acknowledged that when results from psychological tests are used appropriately they can provide helpful information for instructional planning but the main problem is that some teachers who do not know the limitations of these tests tend to overuse the results or draw invalid conclusions about the ability or prior achievement of learners. Others do not use them at all because they are unsure of how to interpret the scores. This typically occurs when the results of psychological assessments are used as the sole criterion for making decisions about a learner.

It is unjust and unethical to use the test assumption to predict the future intellectual ability of a learner or place him/her in a particular programme (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1991). Results from the tests should always be used together with other types of evidence, such as teacher observation, learners' social background and classroom assessments. This also applies to some teachers in the Free State Department of Education. They would not understand the language used in the test reports about learners and tend to use results incorrectly or not at all. This would render the whole evaluation process useless (Mc Millan, 1997, p. 79). Criticism of psychological assessment or psychological tests has necessitated a shift from the use of standardised psychological tests to more humanistic non-standardised assessment and evaluation methods. Alternative methods of assessment have become the favourites. The shift to alternative assessment places more weight on teacher assessment and collecting data from the social milieu of a learner. Alternative methods of assessment are perceived to be more developmental than psychological assessment.

A number of factors have necessitated this paradigm shift. The first issue is that of test-centrism which was looked on as a barrier and a discriminatory factor by many people, especially to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Alternative assessment seems relevant for inclusive education because it offers alternative methods of assessment to the traditional methods like standardised psychological tests and non-standardised tests.

2.3.1. 6 Perceptions of psychometric testing

The use of psychological assessment has been criticised not only in South Africa but also worldwide. There is a problem with the current assessment practices, methods and the aims of assessment and evaluation in South African schools. There is a lack of connection between psychological assessment and learners' needs (Reschly, 1996). My experience as an education specialist tells me that some schools in the Free State referred learners to child guidance clinics with the sole aim of placing them in special education. This has been seen as a form of discrimination and served as gate keeping especially for black learners in white-dominated schools. In such a scenario, there was very little connection between pre-referral and referral process, assessment tools or techniques used in the assessment process, planning and instruction, and recommendations at the end. Weishaar and Borsa (2001, p. 41) confirm the above:

Once a child had failed to succeed in the regular classroom and a referral made, the assessment process often consisted of a "standard battery" of tests, often administered by a school psychologists. Educational tests administered by the school psychologist (and other specialists) often were administered in a separate room isolated from the child's natural environments. There often was little connection between a psychologist's formal test scores and formulating a plan for instruction.

This was often the case with Free State child guidance clinics until the implementation of EWP6 (2001) in 2003. According to this policy document, the aim of assessment is to determine the educational needs of a learner and work on the plan of action to maximise his/her potential. The focus is more on intervention, support, creating an enabling environment and gathering data from the natural environment instead of formal standardised tests like intelligence or achievement tests. This calls for the assessment production techniques which are being informed by the eco-systemic approach to the evaluation of learners. This approach promotes the use of multiple sources of information about a learner.

According to the eco-systemic approach on the assessment of learners, the assessor should look at what causes a barrier in the learning of a learner. Inclusive education assessment suggests a change in the way assessment is conducted “with” learners who experience barriers to learning. This means that therapists like psychologists will have to change their roles in assessing learners. Concerning the role of the school psychologists, Weishaar and Borsa (2001, p. 42) say:

The traditional role of the school psychologist as “testing and placing” children in special education is evolving and changing. More emphasis is placed on consultation, prevention, support and training of educators and problem-solving functions. The old paradigm of the school psychologist as primarily administering standardised tests is slowly being supplemented by a new role where psychologists assist teachers in developing effective intervention strategies in regular classrooms and possibly participate in school-based pre-referral teams.

The “school-based pre-referral teams” according to EWP6 (2001) are called the “school-based support teams” or “institutional-based-support teams”. These teams gather environmentally based evidence about the behaviour or performance of a learner before he/she is referred to any health professional. When doing so, educators will be informed by the eco-systemic approach to learner support and assessment. The adoption of the eco-systemic approach to learner assessment was a reaction to the medical model or psychometric approach where a majority of learners would be recommended for special education. There was a worldwide concern about a large proportion of learners, especially “blacks” in South Africa who were recommended for special education. Weishaar and Borsa (2001, p. 42) say some of the concerns were that:

There was a perception of over-referral of students for psychological assessment and evaluation and the over-identification of students to be placed in special education. There was a perception of over-emphasis on standardised assessment techniques utilised primarily to determine if a student is eligible for special education. Evaluation of special education activities has been based too much on programs rather than students outcomes.

The concerns raised by Weishaar and Borsa (2001) are the concerns raised by a number of people, especially parents in the Free State, about a large number of learners who were referred for psychological intervention and eventually ended up in special education.

This study sought to explore what were the aims of psychological assessment of learners in Free State child guidance clinics. It is then suggested that the eco-systemic approach to psychological evaluation of learners is the most relevant approach in an inclusive education context. Some schools in the Free State would see psychological assessment as an answer to learners' problems while some would regard it as a form of discrimination. Schools would identify learners who show poor academic performance, emotional and behavioural problems and refer them to a "remedial specialist".

The remedial specialist would screen the referral forms, make recommendations and refer some learners to a child guidance clinic. The child guidance clinic would then perform a psychological intervention. Ashman and Conway (1997, p.92) concur with this: "If a student was perceived to have a learning problem, the classroom teacher would refer the student to the school counsellor or guidance officer or to a school psychologist who would administer a battery of tests to determine the nature – if not the cause – of the problem. Almost invariably, the first test administered would have been an individual intelligence test. The aim of the referral in most cases was for placement in special programmes or to find out what was wrong with the learner. This assessment approach is termed the medical deficit assessment approach. Such an assessment approach was not always welcomed by learners or even parents.

At the end of the psychological evaluation, a child guidance clinic would send a report to the school and the referring educator would interpret it to the parent and the learner. My experience as an education specialist working at the child guidance clinic tells me that a number of referring educators did not implement the recommendations from reports. They would place the report in a learner's file and continue in much the same way as before. The reasons for this could be that they did not fully understand the reports (the terminology used), lacked resources for implementing the recommendations, or the parents lacked the necessary funds, or the recommendations were not practical. Another reason is that many counsellors and psychologists lack the classroom teaching experience; hence the difficulty of suggesting valid intervention strategies to classroom teachers whose job is instruction. In some instances educators would not agree with the results of the assessment as they found that the relationship between the IQ test performance and the child's in-class performance was tenuous at best. Recommendations often did not relate to improving a learner's performance on practical class activities (Ashman & Conway, 1997, p. 92-93). Failing to implement the recommendations would render the whole psychological evaluation process futile.

Psychologists in private practice still use IQ testing. A parent would refer his/her child to a private psychologist to determine what is wrong with him or her. This I see as the medical model of child assessment. Parents have for a long time been made to understand that whenever a child does not perform well in school, he/she must be psychometrically assessed so as to find out what is wrong with him or her. This shows exactly how deep-rooted psychometric assessment is in regard to assisting learners who experience barriers to learning and development. Such an approach does not help a learner to realise his/her potential. It does not mean that a psychologist must always use psychometric testing when conducting a psychological evaluation; sometimes alternative methods of evaluation like clinical observation and family background, as it has been indicated earlier, could be of help. The approach of helping a teacher to help learners is very good unless the situation demands that individual support is the best. This is the approach therapist must use when assisting schools. Among other reasons why this approach is adopted is the fact that there are few therapists in the education department against a large number of learners. A paradigm shift is therefore indicated.

2. 3.1.7 Test fairness and bias

Some researchers differentiate between “fairness” and “bias”. They propose that “bias” pertains to the impact of the psychometric properties of the test, which affect the test result, whilst “fairness” pertains to the way in which the results are interpreted and applied. A test may therefore be fair and valid, but the results used unfairly. Bias can be viewed as a statistical characteristic of the test score or the predictions based on that score. It is said to exist when a test makes systematic errors in measurement or prediction (Society for Industrial Psychology, 1998, p. 27-28). Test results interpretation is a crucial aspect of psychometric assessment. It must be done by someone who is well versed in psychometrics. Not all psychologists are skilled in the use of psychometrics. This is where meaning is attached to tests results and decisions taken for intervention. A test may be valid and reliable, but its results used unfairly. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 156) say:

During the last decade, researchers have made a concerted effort to address the need for more reliable and valid developmental measures for South African children. The focus of such research had been twofold, namely the construction of new culture-reduced tests and adapting, refining, and norming appropriate tests that have been constructed and proven to be valid and reliable in other countries.

2.3.1.8 Test fairness

Fairness is a social rather than a psychometric concept. Its definition depends on what one considers fair. It has no single meaning and therefore, no single statistical definition. Fairness or the lack thereof is therefore not the result of the assessment instrument or predictor, nor is it the property of the assessment procedure used. Fairness is the total of all the variables that play a role or influence the final personnel decision. Foxcroft and Roodt (2003, p. 117) say that according to the International Test Commission's Guidelines for Test Use, fair assessment entails the appropriate, fair, professional and ethical use of assessment measures and assessment results. It takes into account the needs and rights of those involved in the assessment process.

Fairness is about ensuring that the assessment conducted closely matches the use to which the assessment results will be put. Moreover, the broader social, cultural, and political context is taken into account. Several factors affect the apparent fairness of the testing process. Firstly, there might be obstacles that prevent some persons from performing well, and unless these are removed or adequately taken into account, the test administration will probably be viewed as unfair. For example, administering a highly speeded test that requires the respondent to fill in small spaces on an answer sheet to a person with a motor impairment is probably unfair. Similarly, having a psychologist from one culture administering a psychological test to a child from another culture is thought by many to be unfair; the differences between the examiner and examinee might make it difficult to establish rapport or may cause the examinee to be overly anxious.

Secondly, tests themselves must not provide unfair advantages to some examinees (Jensen, 1980, in Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001, p. 59). There is a belief that many tests are used for purposes for which they have little or no validity. Some researchers have used intelligence tests to prove their theories on intellectual and racial superiority. In test fairness and usage, the testing process, outcomes and usage of results should be intertwined. One way of addressing the issue of fairness is to use multiple assessment procedures. One of the key issues in the debate on test fairness and validity is that whites dominate the testing industry in South Africa, yet tests are applied across the racial spectrum (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001, p. 59-61). This is evidenced in the empirical study conducted at the Free State child guidance clinics. Many of the assessors at these clinics are white and Afrikaans-speaking. This has created a lot of problems as far as cultural issues are concerned and the issue of bias and fairness became very apparent.

In South Africa, the use of psychometric assessment in schools has become a bone of contention. Fairness should be the basis of all assessment forms. Successful assessment means that learners must regard the assessment as fair. There are two words that describe fairness in assessment, namely *validity* and *reliability*. To be fair in assessment, the assessor must aim at as much validity and reliability as possible. From the learner's point of view, one has to ask whether the assessment is fair or not (Sieborger & Macintosh, 2002, p. 11-12). Therefore it is important that anyone interpreting psychometric data must consider ethnic variations between groups, bearing in mind the historical background and discriminatory practices in this country.

2.3. 1.9 Test bias

Maree (2003, p. 89) and Zeidner and Most (1992, p. 403) define a biased test as "one that contains items that are more familiar to one population than another." This is in spite of the fact that there is no agreement among different authors about the definition of test bias and the exact factors that produce a biased test. Owen (1998, p. 16) concurs with the above statements when saying "examinees taking a particular test should be similar in cultural, educational and social background, and experiences to those on whom the test has been standardised and the test norms based. If the testee or group differs from the standardisation sample, the use of the norms for evaluating current performance or prediction may be inappropriate". This is evidenced in the interviews held with the assessors about the psychological assessment of learners in the Free State Department of Education.

Most assessors felt that age norms and cultural influence of most tests used were not relevant for most of the learners, especially black learners. They said: "We have few psychological tools that we use; unfortunately they are not all culturally fair and language fair. At least we have the Ravens test which is better in that aspect but the age range for the Ravens is even not covering all learners, so we have a problem with the tests that we use." There is a belief that psychological tests are heavily biased in favour of and reflect the values of European American, middle-class society. It is said that such tests cannot adequately assess intelligence or personality when applied to black South African learners. Test bias may result from a number of factors, among others the content. This means that tests may provide content that is encountered more typically by whites than by blacks (Groth-Marnat, 2003, p. 57). Differences in values and beliefs held by individuals in different groups may lead to cognitively equivalent answers, some of which may be scored as incorrect on standardised tests. Language and culture also play a vital role. Linguistic bias and cultural chauvinism comes in when examiners from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds examine learners from another culture.

Some examiners may consciously or unconsciously put their cultural values before those of the examinees. In a testing situation, an examinee may perform poorly on a test by creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Previous negative experiences of labelling might lead him/her to believe that he/she cannot do well in a test. The ability of the examinee to overcome such prior discrimination and negative labelling constitutes an important access skill. Sometimes tests may predict test scores and other relevant criteria for white, majority-culture individuals, but they might not do so for members of other groups. Some critics of tests have charged that the criteria used as the basis for research on prediction may themselves be biased. Lastly, the characteristics of the standardisation sample might have bias features.

Ethnic minorities and some other protected groups may be represented by low absolute numbers in standardisation samples even when they are included at levels equal to those in the general population. As a result this may bias item selection for tests and thus the inclusion of ethnic groups in the standardisation sample may fail to influence the resulting test itself (Frisby & Reynolds, 2005, p. 797-798). The above sources of bias are the reflection of test bias according to the American perspective, in South Africa blacks are in majority but when it comes to test standardisation samples, they are in minority. Most psychological tests in South Africa reflect whites as the majority in the standardisation sample. Such tests are then used in all racial groups, partly because there is a lack of tests standardised for other racial groups.

Tests in use in South Africa reflect values of the white-black urban middle class. This does not deny the fact that there are tests which were designed for black South Africans. South Africa is a multicultural, democratic country which creates a challenge for tests developers as to which test(s) would be suitable for such a society (Friedenberg, 1995, p. 327-329). A number of tests which have been adopted from other countries and used in South Africa are culturally biased towards certain groups of learners. Whatever psychological test or technique is used to evaluate learners, it needs to be reliable and valid to the group of learners being evaluated. Some tests like the Junior South African Individual Scales (JSAIS) were developed for a child whose mother tongue is Afrikaans or English, but are also used to assess black learners. To confirm test bias in South Africa, Chapter 5 shows that assessors complain about culture-unfairness in tests that they use. These practitioners have now realised that they must not only collect information by using standardised psychological assessment tests but also make use of unstructured evaluation techniques which are culture-fair. Ashman and Conway (1997, p. 93) say, "Psychological and educational practitioners are now likely to collect information about individuals through unstructured observations and interviews"

Such an assessment approach is holistic in nature and is informed by the eco-systemic model on psychological evaluation. This is in line with the principles of inclusive education assessment and evaluation of learners. Inclusive education principles of assessment and evaluation promote the growth and development of learners. Although most tests which are used in South Africa are culture-biased, there are tests which are said to be culture-fair. Bender Gestalt and Paper and Pencil Games (PPG) are some of them.

2.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Psychological evaluation is the process of interpreting and making judgments about assessment information. Van der Horst and McDonald (1997, p. 168) state: “the word ‘evaluate’: e-value-ate, means putting a value to something – deciding on the worth of something”. By itself psychological assessment data is neither good nor bad. It simply mirrors what is going on in the psychological assessment process. This information becomes meaningful only when we decide that it reflects something that we value, so psychological evaluation here is used as the extension of psychological assessment. In the evaluation of the progress of a learner by means of psychological assessment, one would also consider the learner’s home background, interests and abilities. This shows that psychological evaluation and psychological assessment are interwoven, although it is not always necessary to use psychological assessment (tests) when evaluating learners (Macintosh & Sieborger, 2002, p. 5-6).

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the focus was on psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The aim of psychological assessment in the past was to find out what was wrong with the assessed (a learner). In the new dispensation, the aim is to enhance teaching and learning to maximise learners’ potentialities. The use of psychological tests in South Africa is under a spotlight since South Africa is a multicultural country. Changes in the South African education system influenced the way psychological assessment and evaluation of learners is conducted in schools. Some schools view the use of psychological assessment as a discriminatory tool; hence they do not trust it. It becomes evident that the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation in education need to be revisited. This means that a need for a paradigm shift in psychological assessment and evaluation in education is inevitable. Pahad (1996, p. 1) says, “a dramatic paradigm shift is needed in assessment practice across education and training in South Africa, as a logical and essential part of the transformation envisaged in new policies.

The critical characteristic of the required shift is the move from a judgemental to a developmental role for assessment”. Assessment practices should be relevant to the educational, social and economic needs of those being assessed. The literature also shows that culture and language play a vital role in psychological assessment. Psychological assessment should be sensitive to cultural and linguistic factors. We need psychological assessment and evaluation policies which are in line with the principles and goals of inclusive education. Implementation and monitoring of such policies is of vital importance. From the above discussions, it looks like there is a need to revisit the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation in schools by the psychological services or support services if we really mean to improve the performance of learners and the community in general.

CHAPTER 3

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the rationale behind the inclusive education assessment and evaluation of learners, especially in South Africa, a brief outline is provided of psychometric assessment and evaluation, the relationship between assessment and curriculum, and culture and language as critical aspects in learner assessment and evaluation. The outline shows how psychometric assessment and evaluation has shaped the education of learners in South Africa. The policy framework which influenced the way learners were and should be assessed is also provided. Furthermore, this chapter charts the way forward on how learners should be assessed and evaluated in an inclusive education setting. This is because of some dramatic changes that have taken place in South Africa since the birth of our democracy in 1994.

Assessment in an inclusive education system is done in collaboration with parents and learners, but teachers and therapists have the responsibility of knitting it into the curriculum and using it to construct an enabling environment. The apartheid education system was characterised by a proliferation of education systems that were organised according to race, ethnicity and mental ability. Psychometric assessment was used as a tool to determine the mental abilities of learners and their education would be provided according to their assessment results. Psychometric assessment is informed by psycho-medical discourse which sees a learner as somehow deficient (Clough & Corbett, 2000). Its focus is on pathology, and the intervention consists of medication or placement in special education. Schools were then segregated according to notions of “normality” and “abnormality”, which meant that there was a mainstream system for “ordinary” learners and a separate special education system for children who fall out of “normal”. Special education was also provided according to race with a lot of disparities between services for different racial groups. This education system regarded learning difficulties as being within the learner rather than within the education system and schools. It tends to rely more on specialists like educational psychologists and psychiatrists. Teachers then feel inadequate to deal with learners’ special needs. Those who are identified as in need of special education services are often labelled “deficient” and as needing special education services.

In addition to the mainstream and special education division, the conditions of schools in rural areas during the apartheid era were appalling and facilities for children with disabilities were and continue to be almost non-existent. The education system has long continued marginalising learners on the basis of cultural, social, linguistic and/or mental abilities (Ntombela, 2006). At this point it is important to talk about the positivist medical approach to educational difficulties as an approach which greatly influenced assessment of learners.

3.2 MEDICAL DISCOURSE

Medical discourse uses scientific methods in trying to establish “the truth” about human behaviour (van Rensburg and Smit 2004, p. 17). This theory tends to reduce the behaviour of human beings to the status of an object which is static. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997, p. 41) say: “we need to accept that human beings cannot be understood as objects that are passively influenced by the forces around them”. Medical discourse on learner assessment assumes that the behaviour and intelligence of a human being can be predicted and measured. This is not true because a human being is a dynamic being. It should be noted that the one thing about a human being that does not change, is that a human being is ever-changing.

Medical discourse constructs a “disability” or a learning breakdown as being within a learner and constructs a process of assessment, diagnosis, prognosis and intervention as necessary to identify and manage that “disability” or learning breakdown. The lens used by the medical discourse limits itself to seeing other factors which play a role in learning breakdown, such as social factors. According to medical discourse, “disability” is an objective attribute, not a social construct and a natural and irremediable characteristic of a learner. This construction of a “disability” leads to the exclusion of many learners as they are seen to be unfit to be included in mainstream education (van Rooyen, Le Grange & Newmark, n.d.).

Psychological assessment which is informed by positivism does not measure the psychometric traits that it claims to measure. Even that which it does measure, cannot be measured holistically. According to the medical discourse, the assessment of learners must be precise, absolute and scientifically proven. This approach assumes that the behaviour and performance of learners can be predicted and that it remains constant long after assessment. To the contrary, the behaviour and performance of a person are influenced by a number of factors, so they are subject to change. One might say that psychological assessment is greatly influenced by medical discourse. This also applies to assessment and evaluation practices at the Free State child guidance clinics, as described in Chapter 5.

Learners who were environmentally and didactically disadvantaged would perform badly in psychological assessment tests and were eventually sent to programmes like special education which have a negative impact in their education and in their lives in general. This does not benefit learners in an inclusive education setting. Gipps (1994, p.30) says the psychometric model of assessment which operates within the realms of the positivistic paradigm “is a static one based on a normal distribution of achievement narrowly defined; this relates to its ideological underpinning of measuring existing individual or group differences in achievement with the overall aim of selection of students”. Such a model does not concur with the principles of inclusive education. It does not assist a learner in realising his/her full potential. Psychometric approach aims at explaining individual differences in performance on standardised tests of mental ability especially IQ tests (Chen & Siegler, 2000, p. 92).

A major disadvantage of the medical discourse to educational difficulties is the fact that difficulties are seen out of context as the educational setting is not assessed; therefore its contribution to the problem is not acknowledged. Learners would then be classified according to their psychometric assessment results as “normal” or “abnormal”. This then created two education systems, viz. the mainstream and special education systems. The provision of special education was according to race, with big educational disparities between different racial groups. These and other factors created a lot of barriers to learning and development. When the democratically elected government took over in 1994, it had to address the educational imbalances of the past.

The emerging rights approach, as entrenched in inclusive education, interrogates all parties and their contribution in addressing barriers to learning and development (Ntombela, 2006). For the government to revamp the whole education system there had to be a major paradigm shift in policies and legislation across the board. Amongst the shifts in policies was the establishment of an inclusive education and training system EWP6 (2001). This policy seeks to integrate special education and mainstream education in order to benefit all learners in South Africa (DoE, 1997). The inclusive education policy is discussed in detail.

3.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY – EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6

People understand and interpret this policy document differently and there are many misconceptions about what inclusive education entails. Inclusive education is about acknowledging that all children and young people can learn and that they need support. It accepts and respects the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued. The inclusive education system is about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies and curricula in order to meet the needs of all learners. It acknowledges and respects differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, languages, class, disability or HIV status. It encourages participation of all learners in the culture and curricula of educational institutions, uncovering and minimising barriers to learning. It is also about empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.

This policy further states that a flexible assessment policy that is accessible to all learners, irrespective of the nature of their learning, needs to be in place. Assessment methods and techniques used to assess and evaluate learners should be such that they do not create a barrier to learning and development. Assessment initiatives will be required to focus on the inclusion of the full range of diverse learning needs. This means that the assessment strategies used should help learners to develop their potentialities. The DoE (2001) states that district-based support teams will give support to schools in the form of learning support materials and assessment instruments. Assessment and interventions during the early phase of life will be appreciated. Community-based clinics in conjunction with other government departments are best positioned to conduct this initial assessment.

Assessment processes will address barriers to learning and current policies and practices will be reviewed and revised to ensure that the needs of all learners are acknowledged and addressed. Criteria for the revision of existing policies and legislation for all bands of education and training, and frameworks for governance and organisation are needed. Policies, legislation and frameworks for the school and college systems must provide the basis for overcoming the causes and effects of barriers to learning. Admission policies will be revised so that learners who can be accommodated outside of special schools and specialised settings can be accommodated within designated full-service or other schools and settings (Do E, 2001, p. 25, 27, 31-33). The implementation of the inclusive education policy compels schools to amend their school policies. Among other subsections that are affected by the amendment is the one on cultural and social aspects.

Schools will have to be informed and be aware of the systemic issues associated with referred cases. They will have to be knowledgeable about institutional racism, cultural misinformation and other systemic issues affecting the education of learners from culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Schools have to provide advice and support to develop systems interventions to support the educational success of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. When working with racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse learners and their families, schools will have an ethical and professional responsibility to assess whether problems presumed to reside within a learner may be manifestations of systemic biases in the institution(s) serving that learner. They will therefore have to rule out systemic factors as causal influences in learners' situation before proceeding with individually-focused assessment or intervention.

Schools have to ensure that the assessments in which they are involved comprise a comprehensive process of gathering information about learners that explicitly takes account of the impact of socio-cultural, environmental, political, experiential, and language-based factors. When conducting an assessment, schools will take into account language and other behaviour considered socially appropriate in the culture of a learner. They will recognise the limitations of standardised instruments and the ramifications of using such instruments in the assessment of racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Frederickson & Cline 2002, p. 154-155). In a multicultural country like South Africa, an assessor needs to be very skilful. He /She must understand the social, economic, political and environmental factors that influence learners' learning, development and scholastic performance. In order to assist learners to achieve, certain guiding principles must be adhered to. There are a number of principles that are most relevant in a multicultural society in an inclusive education context.

3.4 PRINCIPLES AND THE PURPOSE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ASSESSMENT IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Effective assessment evaluation should consider that learners come from culturally diverse, multilingual and multiracial, urban-rural and technologically developing societies. If an assessor has to conduct a valid, ethical and fair assessment to learners in a multicultural society like South Africa, he/she has to understand the cultural, family, linguistic, educational and socio-economic background and heritage of the assessed (learners). It is therefore important to revisit the way learners are identified as experiencing problems, assessed and supported to maximise their potentialities.

The process of identification, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools needs to be revisited and replaced by one where learners are supported in their “normal” daily school environments. Current inequitable and exclusionary practices associated with psychological evaluation will have to be rooted out to ensure that all learners become eligible for support within an integrated education system. It is therefore important to have guiding principles in place when assessing learners in an inclusive education context. Some of the principles will have a radical impact on current practices within the inclusive education system.

3.4.1 Principles of assessment

Educators, parents and learners need to be centrally involved in the assessment and evaluation process. A criterion-referenced approach must be used instead of norm-reference. It must be authentic, continuous, multi-dimensional, varied, accurate, objective, valid, fair, manageable, time-efficient and balanced. Assessment is an ongoing, integral part of the learning process. Information is gathered from several contexts and various methods are used according to what is being assessed and the needs of the learner. The methods and techniques used must be appropriate to the knowledge, skills, or attitudes to be assessed as well as to the age and developmental level of the learner. It needs to be appropriate and relevant to the realities and context of the person concerned, must be bias free and sensitive to gender, race, cultural background and abilities. Assessment results must be clearly, accurately and timeously documented and meaningfully communicated to those affected. Progress should be linked to the achievement of the specific outcomes and should not be rigidly time-bound. Evidence of progress in achieving outcomes shall be used to identify areas where learners need support. Furthermore, Lamprecht (1999) highlights the following 10 principles of assessment:

3.4.1.1 Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning

Teachers’ planning should provide opportunities for learners to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. Assessment has to be flexible to respond to initial and emerging ideas and skills. Planning should include strategies to ensure that learners understand the goals they are pursuing and the criteria that will be applied in assessing their work. How learners will receive feedback, how they will take part in assessing their learning and how they will be helped to make further progress should also be planned.

3.4.1.2 Assessment for learning should focus on how students learn

Both learners and teachers need to be aware of the process of learning when assessment is planned. Learners should know beforehand how they will be assessed and what will be expected of them. Learning, teaching and assessment should be interwoven.

3.4.1.3 Assessment as central to classroom practice

A lot of what teachers and learners do in the classroom can be described as assessment. Classroom tasks and questions prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. What learners say and do is then observed and interpreted and judgments are made about how learning can be improved. These assessment processes are an essential part of everyday classroom practice and involve both teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue and decision making.

3.4.1.4 Assessment as a key professional skill for teachers

Teachers require the professional knowledge and skills to plan for assessment; observe learning; analyse and interpret evidence of learning; give feedback to learners; and support learners in self-assessment. Teachers should be supported in developing these skills through initial and continuing professional development.

3.4.1.5 The impact of assessment results on learners' emotions

Teachers should be aware of the impact the assessment results can have on learners' confidence and enthusiasm and should be as constructive as possible in their feedback. Comments that focus on the work rather than the person are more constructive for both learning and motivation.

3.4.1.6 Assessment as a motivational factor

Assessment that encourages learning fosters motivation by emphasising progress and achievement rather than failure. Comparison of learners in terms of their learning and assessment might discourage those who do not show satisfactory progress, so it must not be used. Motivation can be preserved and enhanced by assessment methods which protect the learner's autonomy, provide some choice and constructive feedback, and create opportunities for self-direction.

3.4.1.7 Relationship between assessment and learning goals

For effective learning to take place, learners need to understand what it is that they want to achieve. This allows them to play a part in deciding goals and identifying criteria for assessing progress. Assessment criteria should be effectively communicated to learners through discussions, using terms that are best understood by them together with examples of how the criteria can be met in practice and engaging learners in peer and self-assessment.

3.4.1.8 Constructive feedback on how to improve

Learners need to be informed and guided in order to plan for the next steps in their learning. It becomes important for teachers to identify learners' strengths and advise them on how to develop. Teachers need to be clear and constructive about learners' weaknesses and how they might be addressed. Opportunities must be provided for learners to improve on their work.

3.4.1.9 Assessment for learning develops learners' capacity for self-assessment

Independent learners have the ability to seek out and gain new skills, knowledge and understandings. They are able to engage in self-reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.

3.4.1.10 Assessment should recognise the full range of achievements of all learners

Assessment for learning should be conducted in such a way that it enhances learners' opportunities to learn in all educational activities. It should enable all learners to achieve their best and to have their efforts recognised.

3.5 PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment and evaluation should be clear, explicit and open. It should be fair, bias-free, and sensitive to gender, race, cultural background and abilities. Assessment needs to identify barriers to learning with the purpose of improving the teaching and learning process.

What is of ultimate importance in assessment is that it must be authentic, continuous, multi-dimensional or systemic in nature, located within the eco-systemic framework of support and development. The different levels of the system that are involved in the assessment process (e.g. institutional-level support teams and district support teams) need to work closely together, ensuring that assessment and evaluation processes are smoothly pursued.

It must be manageable, time-efficient and drawn from various perspectives. The standard of assessment should not be compromised, nor should a learner be given an unfair advantage over other learners. Therefore, the same academic requirements and standards should be applied to all learners. Assessment is designed to place learners who experience barriers to learning on an equal footing with others, and not to give them any additional advantage; therefore it should enable learners to receive a true account of their knowledge and/or skills. Early identification through assessment and evaluation is necessary so that learners who experience barriers to learning have the opportunity to realise their potential. Therefore, learners in need of support should be identified early in order to establish the necessary mechanisms. They will then be accustomed to the assessment and evaluation methods concerned before they are assessed (DoE, 2002, p. 78-79; Lamprecht, 1999; DoE, 2005, p. 3 & 26-27).

The core purpose of assessment, as mentioned above, is to improve teaching and learning and help the learner to realise his/her potentialities. In the inclusive education context, assessment should not only look at academic challenges but also at socio-psychological, economic and political challenges. This becomes an indispensable factor to address as our communities are affected by challenges such as HIV and AIDS, child-headed families, unemployment, poor socio-economic status (disadvantaged communities), substance abuse and teenage pregnancy, child molestation and rape and the fact that our country is going through a political transformation. Psychological assessment and evaluation can help to enhance the goals of inclusive education. This means that psychological evaluation, especially psychometric assessment, must be used with caution. In order to enhance validity in multicultural assessment in a country like South Africa, it is important to note how psychological tests have been made suitable for use in a multicultural context. Caution must be taken that some tests have been imported from Western countries and are being used in non-Western countries. New, appropriate instruments with culture-specific norms must be developed. The advent of multicultural assessment is mainly inspired by a growing societal need; it is a response to the perceived need to deal with a multitude of cultures in assessment without the designation of a single culture as the target or model for other cultures (van der Vijver & Rothmann, 2004, p. 6).

All of the above-mentioned principles and purposes of assessment in learning emphasise learning and quality assessment. In an inclusive education system, teaching, learning and assessment are interwoven to form a humanistic, systemic and developmental support system in which learners can achieve. Learners and teachers work together in learning and assessment. Such an assessment approach is fair and developmental. This resonates well with the eco-systemic approach to learner assessment and development.

3.6 REPOSITIONING ASSESSMENT

Assessment should be based on premises that are more consistent with the aims and principles of inclusive education than with psychometric assessment, which pathologises learners. If assessment procedures are to be informed by the principles of inclusive education, they should reflect assessment tasks which relate to the practicalities and assist learners in learning and succeeding. If assessment is still Eurocentric and medical and discriminates against learners who experience barriers to learning and development, the aims and principles of inclusive education will remain a theory. Psychometric assessment should only be used in schools for diagnostic purposes and learners should be part of the assessment process. No fair assessment can take place if the assessor's authority is still unquestioned and learners have little or no say in their assessment. Such an assessment does not benefit learners and should not be conducted at all (Nkoane, 2006).

It is of the utmost importance to note that learners bring their social experiences to the assessment sessions, which influences assessment results. Some come from academically deprived environments with few opportunities and resources for learning; hence, they are less motivated during the assessment session. The language of instruction may put learners at a disadvantage, by creating difficulties in understanding questions. Psychometric assessment, unlike inclusive education assessment, requires learners to recall fragmented and decontextualised facts and skills (Supovitz & Brennan, 1997). Learners' progression is often linked to their mental ability and performance on assessment. In this study, the view adopted is that inclusive education demands a flexible, success-oriented means of assessment and evaluation. The assessment of learners should be related to the aims of the curriculum, culture, their experiences and abilities. Outcomes-based education assessment requires that learners' progress be measured against broad results expected at the end of each learning progress, such as general skills, abilities and values. It can be ongoing assessment to obtain feedback from learners' learning and teachers' success in selecting appropriate teaching methods, as well as the need to adjust to the pace or style of teaching.

In this way, learners can be evaluated against their own achievement instead of being compared with other learners. Assessment could be achieved in a flexible manner and time when the learner has acquired new knowledge, a new skill or competency, even new attitudes and values, when the teacher has finished teaching particular content (Supovitz & Brennan, 1997).

3.7 ASSESSMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONTEXT

Inclusive education assessment is a reaction to the psychometric model of assessment which uses psychological tests to assess learners. This approach has been seen as not assisting learners to realise their potential. Many learners were excluded from participation in mainstream education through the use of psychometric tests and were referred to special education. According to the DoE (2008, p. 2), “There is an increasing number of learners being referred to special schools from their local mainstream schools. In a space of three years (2004 to 2007), the number has increased by more than 15 000 learners (from 77 752 to 93 000)”. It is because of situations like these that the DoE (2008) has established an assessment strategy called Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). The SIAS strategy forms part of the implementation of White Paper 6 – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. Its purpose is to screen and identify learners who experience barriers to learning and development and establish a support package to address these barriers.

SIAS also provides assessment guidelines on enrolling learners in special schools and other settings. However, admission to a special school should be considered a last option where appropriate support is not available at a local school. Learners who are admitted to special schools are only those who need a high level of support. They must have been assessed properly using SIAS as an assessment strategy and not psychometric assessment (psychological tests). Assessment should be diagnostic in nature and indicate the level of support a learner needs (DoE, 2007, p. 7). The intention of the SIAS strategy is to assess the level and extent of support needed to maximise learners’ participation in the learning process. Table 3.1 below illustrates the four stages of SIAS.

Table 3.1 SIAS Process (adapted from DoE, 2008, p., 10-11) SIAS School Pack

<p>STAGE 1</p> <p>Learner profile</p> <p>School and teacher gain background information of learner to understand basic needs, talents and aspirations.</p>
<p>STAGE 2</p> <p>Teacher reflection</p> <p>Parent consultation and involvement</p> <p>Identify learner support needs</p> <p>Review teaching and classroom practices and arrangements</p> <p>Review whole school changes and support strategies</p> <p>Identify community resources and track support</p>
<p>STAGE 3</p> <p>Assessment of support requirements – determining level and nature of support needed</p> <p>Consultation by DBST with institution-level support team, teachers and parents:</p> <p>Review impacts on the school’s and teacher’s work</p> <p>Analyse school capacity within existing resources to meet needs and achieve school improvement</p> <p>Identify community resources</p> <p>In-depth assessment of learner support needs</p> <p>Determine support package</p> <p>Application for additional resources</p> <p>Determine eligibility for access to alternative specialised programmes</p> <p>Make inputs to action plan</p>
<p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Action planning, provisioning and monitoring of additional support</p> <p>Review and analyse SNA</p> <p>Verify Institutional Level Support Team assessment</p> <p>Decision making by District Based Support Team</p> <p>Provision of additional support to school and learner</p> <p>Resource allocation</p> <p>Training, counselling and mentoring of school, teachers and parents</p> <p>Monitoring support provision</p>

This study focuses on assessment that is more inclusive in approach than on psychometric assessment, as it has been indicated above in the SIAS strategy. The review of assessment methods in the South African education system is a critical area as it should meet learners' needs. Inclusive education assessment should be flexible, humanistic and emancipatory. When Eurocentric, imperialistic and colonial ideologies of the education system are replaced with democratic ones, methods of assessment must also change to accommodate participative assessment, multiplicity of views, understanding and interpretation (Nkoane, 2006). Traditional assessment methods (psychometric assessment) are fundamentally flawed because they fail to take into account the biases of the assessor. Some traditional assessment methods used for assessing learners who experience learning difficulties are too authoritarian, in that assessors exercised unilateral, intellectual authority by holding the power to make decisions (Rowntree, 1987).

Assessment is one of the critical aspects in the teaching and learning process. In the assessment process, power plays a vital role on who assesses whom and the purpose of assessment. Heron (1979, p. 13) concurs, saying: "Assessment is the most political of all processes; it is where issues of power are most at stake. If there is no educator and learner collaboration in assessment, then educators exert a stranglehold that inhibits the development of collaboration with respect to all other processes." In the inclusive education assessment, teachers, learners, parents, ILST and DBST play a collaborative role. Inclusive education assessment is crucial because it ensures that assessment processes and activities are used "to test the quality of thinking, not the quantity of what is thought" (French & Grey, 1996, p. 104).

3.8 TYPES OF ASSESSMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONTEXT

The following types of assessment have been identified and are relevant for realising the goals of inclusive education:

- Formative assessment, where the strengths and weaknesses of learners, curriculum, or institution are identified and areas for action for improvement are identified and follow-ups made;
- Diagnostic assessment, where barriers to learning, including learning difficulties experienced, are identified and programmes of action developed;
- In evaluative assessment information about achievements is pulled together and reported ;

- Non-formal assessment is used here specifically to describe assessment by departmental officials which is not made on the basis of measuring the performance of learners;
- Informal assessment often takes place without the learner realising that it is happening, while an official is aware that he or she is assessing;
- Formal assessment takes place when learners are aware that they are being assessed and it is specially arranged e.g. psychological assessment (DoE, 2002).

Inclusive education assessment provides for the use of a number of assessment strategies that take care of learners' needs and the fact that these learners come from a multicultural society. Inclusive education assessment is developmental in its approach. According to DoE (2001), the assessment process should start at school level before a learner is referred to any external agent. Any assessment tool, technique or method used to assess learners should aim at promoting teaching and learning. Learners must benefit from assessment more than any interested party. It should maximise their potentialities and opportunities for learning and development. It is also important to note the vital role that culture and language play in the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The paragraph to follow explains more on the role of culture and language in the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners.

3.9 METHODS, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF ASSESSMENT

In inclusive education, learner achievement is measured against specific outcomes using a wide range of methods, like informal monitoring, observation, formal use of appropriate and approved standardised tests, oral questions and answers, conferencing, interviewing, self-assessment, self-reporting, and peer assessment. Assessment should be continuous and include a variety of suitable assessment tools and techniques. Teachers should have a sound knowledge of what each technique offers. These include portfolio assessment, observation sheets, journals, tests, project work and assignments. A balanced combination of these techniques should be employed to ascertain achievement of learners, as fairly and transparently as possible (DoE, 1998, p. 12).

3.10 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Assessment of learners with special educational needs, including gifted and talented learners, should follow the assessment principles outlined above. These principles are expected to be progressively applied as capacity is increased.

It is important that learners who are likely to experience barriers to learning and development are identified early, assessed and provided with learning support programmes. Early identification will be done by parents, professionals in the health sector, community-based and school clinics. This will require the establishment of clear links between these services and the formal education system. Good learning practices in schools will ensure that learning support plays a full part in the assessment and reporting process. A good reporting system should be developed which will not unfairly discriminate against learners with special educational needs or give an impression that learning support is only concerned with those who have learning difficulties. Such a system must provide all parents with real opportunities to support their children's learning. Education support personnel have an important role in supporting teachers and parents in assessment and they should develop appropriate intervention strategies to make assessment effective. The implementation of this new system of teacher-driven assessment must be supported by a programme of orientation and training of teachers and education support services personnel (DoE, 1998, p. 15-16).

3.11 INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE IN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Researchers and psychologists working with culturally diverse populations have acknowledged several problems associated with the assessment of ethnic and cultural majority groups. Clinicians have recognised that cultural factors play a critical role in the expression of psychopathology and are an important context in which psychological evaluation is made. Most psychological tests constructed to assess cognitive functioning are subject to bias as they are culturally unfair. Instructions may not be understood if not translated into the subject's language. Assessment of memory may depend on what the cultural group of which the individual belongs as important to remember (Jewell, 1989, p. 299-305). Louw, van Eden and Louw (1998, p. 342) say, "Measurement of the cognitive abilities of children in middle childhood in South Africa is problematic because of the differences in the learning environment (school and at home) of children from different ethnic groups. One should, take cognisance of tests developed or standardised for use in South Africa."

Conducting psychological assessment in a country like South Africa where cultural diversity and language play a vital role is a challenging task. Cohen, Swerdlik and Smith (1992, p. 61) say, "When an individual with limited language skills in English is to be tested, certain problems are encountered e.g. transforming the test into an equivalent form understandable to the test taker, comprehending and scoring the test taker's responses, and meaningfully interpreting test data."

Some tests including the SSAIS-R have been translated into African languages, although this has been accompanied by a number of problems like multiple official languages, shortage of test administrators who can speak the respective languages, dialects spoken in different areas and a difference in performance between urban and rural individuals tested in their mother tongue (Bedell, van Eeden & van Staden, n.d., p.2). This is the problem experienced by most assessors in the Free State Department of Education as it is evidenced in the empirical study (see Chapter 5).

Different learners, especially black learners, vary in their English proficiency because of differential educational opportunities. It is also important to mention that there are black learners who have been acculturated into the white, Indian and/or Coloured culture and use English most of the time in communicating and in learning. The decision to translate a test or not should depend on the learner's proficiency in the language of testing. This has an effect on the interpretation of tests results. An ideal situation is that learners must be assessed in their first language (mother tongue) which sometimes creates a number of problems. Some of the problems as seen by Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 136) are that for the foreseeable future there will still be more measures available in English and Afrikaans as it will take a number of years to adapt and translate measures into the different African languages.

Secondly, many South Africans have been or are being educated in their second or third language, either by choice or because of past apartheid educational policies. Particularly in instances where a measure taps previously learned knowledge like in certain subtests of intelligence measures, it may be fairer to assess learners in the language medium in which they were or are being educated, instead of in their first language. This means that in a school situation, it is advisable that learners be assessed in languages in which they are comfortable or competent. English should nevertheless not be the only language used in assessment. Equally important, it should not be taken for granted that learners should be assessed in their mother tongue. There are learners in South Africa who are not competent in their mother tongue. For instance, a learner whose mother tongue is Southern Sotho but is staying with Zulu-speaking people and speaks IsiZulu most of his/her time might not be competent in Southern Sotho. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 136) say because of the problems caused by the language factor in assessment, the Psychometrics Committee of the Professional Board for Psychology has suggested that:

A test-taker should be assessed in a language in which he/she is sufficiently proficient.

The assessment practitioner thus firstly has to determine the test-taker's proficiency in the language in which the measure will be administered.

If a measure is administered in a test-taker's second or third language, the assessment process should be designed in such a way that threats to the reliability and validity of the measure are minimised. The assessment practitioner or a trained interpreter could make use of bilingual communication when giving test instructions, so as to ensure that the instructions are understood and the best possible performance is elicited. A measure should only be administered by an assessment practitioner who possesses a sufficient level of proficiency in the language in which it is being administered.

The above are some of the concerns about using psychological assessment in South African schools. Another problem that affects the practice of psychological assessment in South Africa is that there is a lack of finance to produce more culture-based tests. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that there are few professionals that are motivated to conduct the research and development needed for new measures. There are a number of language and cultural issues that need to be dealt with before a learner could be assessed or evaluated. The scope of this study does not allow me to dwell on all the language and cultural issues involved in the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. Further research in these issues is necessary.

3.12 POSITION ON PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Seeing that psychological assessment has had a major impact in the learning-teaching arena, it then becomes imperative that its role in education must be looked at through a critical lens. It then stands to reason that its aims in an inclusive education setting need to be revisited. This means that a paradigm shift in psychological assessment and evaluation practices in inclusive education is inevitable. Pahad (1996, p. 1) says, "A dramatic paradigm shift is needed in assessment practice across education and training in South Africa, as a logical and essential part of the transformation envisaged in new policies. The critical characteristic of the required shift is the move away from a judgmental to a developmental role for assessment." This is necessitated by the new policies in education, politics and social justice. The aims and processes of psychological assessment and evaluation in inclusive education need to be revisited to check whether they are still serving the current needs of learners. Psychological assessment practices should be relevant to educational, social and economic needs of those being assessed (learners). All affected stakeholders must be involved during and after the assessment process.

Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p. 30) further say:

Psychological assessment in South Africa has been and is currently being shaped by legislation and the political dispensation of the day. There is a need for appropriate measures to be developed that can be used in a fair and unbiased way for people from all cultural groups in South Africa. Assessment practitioners should take personal responsibility for ethical test use and training and professional practice guidelines provided by statutory bodies like the Professional Board for Psychology, Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) and the People Assessment Initiative (PAI) must be adhered to.

Group and individual diagnostic assessment will no longer be used to make decisions around developing learning and support programmes for learners who need additional support needs, although DoE (2001) is not explicit about the use of psychological assessment in an inclusive education system. In an inclusive education context, decision making around the support programme involves the learner, parents and the teacher. An ideal situation is that schools should be able to support learners within their premises, therefore there should be no need to involve any professional from outside the school to come and diagnose the intrinsic barriers of a learner, especially if such a person does not have insight into the teaching and learning environment and does not share the cultural background of the learner (DoE, 2004).

The understanding created by the inclusive education policy (DoE, 2001) on the use of psychological tests and techniques in an inclusive education system is that if it becomes necessary to use them, they should aim at increasing learning opportunities for learners and developing their potential. The core purpose of all assessment within education is to promote effective teaching and learning. In an inclusive education context, psychological assessment and evaluation should aim at achieving educational and curriculum objectives. In assessing learners it is important that assessment practitioners and educators must inform parents regarding the purpose of assessment and obtain their informed consent. Psychologists and educators can team up to gather assessment data that can inform appropriate educational intervention and programme development.

Psychological assessment and evaluation should assist in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning and those who might benefit from psychological intervention (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001, p. 274). This assessment cannot be used to classify learners according their disabilities. It can also not be used to refer learners to special education but it can be used to develop a learning support programme.

Care needs to be taken to cater for the linguistic and other cultural aspect when assessing and developing a support programme. Psychological tests should be used in conjunction with other counselling techniques and/or biographical information. Although testing can sometimes be used in making educational decisions, it is only part of the data-production process. Educational decisions should be made on the basis of several types of objective data, including test results, grades, teacher evaluations and/or recommendations, and student interviews with school or counselling psychologists, SBST or DBST. The quality of a decision is a direct function of the quality of the information used.

3.13 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM

Ideally there should be a close link between assessment and the rest of the curriculum so that as far as possible assessment will take place in accordance with the intentions of the curriculum (Macintosh & Sieborger, 2002, p. 33-34). In this era of economic and educational advancement, we need a curriculum which promotes higher-order thinking, reasoning, competency, integration of education and training, an outcomes-based rather than a content-based curriculum, responsibility and problem-solving skills. Learners should be assessed on what they have learnt, or what progress they have made. What if there is no connection between what they have learnt and what is assessed, or if what is assessed has to be selected because everything cannot be assessed? In an inclusive education setting, a learner must be assessed holistically, i.e. physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. Such a type of assessment is said to be developmental in that it considers the well-being of a learner.

It is also developmental in the sense that it looks at the strengths and diagnoses weaknesses for intervention and improvement (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001, p. 155). Assessment can have a positive strengthening effect on the curriculum and at other times it can have a negative influence. In a situation where the aims of assessment do not enhance teaching and learning, it then becomes possible that it does not relate to the requirements of a curriculum. A relevant situation could be when the ultimate aim of learning to read is to read quietly to oneself, but the way in which reading is assessed is by reading aloud to someone else. Curriculum documents and learning materials may specify that learners should undertake science experiments, but they are assessed by making notes neatly in their books or by describing the experiments in an examination. In other situations one might find that learners are expected to understand the history that they are studying, but they are assessed by means of short questions, which only test the memorisation of facts. In an inclusive education system assessment should enhance teaching and learning.

3.14 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the focus was on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting. The use of psychological assessment and evaluation in an inclusive education system should be to enhance teaching and learning. The way psychological assessment and evaluation is conducted in education needs to be revisited. This means that a need for a paradigm shift in education is inevitable. Pahad (1996, p. 1) says, “A dramatic paradigm shift is needed in assessment practice across education and training in South Africa, as a logical and essential part of the transformation envisaged in new policies. The critical characteristic of the required shift is the move from a judgmental to a developmental role for assessment.” Assessment practices should be relevant to the educational, social and economic needs of learners.

From the above discussions, it becomes clear that psychological services or support services needs to revisit the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation in schools if we really mean to improve the performance of learners and the community in general. Psychological assessment tools and techniques used in schools should consider that learners come from culturally diverse, multilingual and multiracial, urban-rural and technologically developing societies. It is therefore important to revisit the way learners are identified as experiencing barriers to learning, assessed and supported. The process of identification, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools needs to be revisited and replaced by the one where learners are supported in their “normal” daily school environments.

Current inequitable and exclusionary practices associated with psychological assessment will have to be rooted out in order to ensure that all learners become eligible for support within an integrated inclusive education system. Assessment in inclusive education should ensure that educators, parents and learners are centrally involved in the evaluation process. It should be appropriate and relevant to the realities and context of learners. It must be fair, bias-free, and sensitive to gender, race, cultural background and abilities. All forms of assessment must aim at enhancing teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous three chapters have defined and discussed the theoretical framework upon which this study is based. It came out that the theoretical bedrock on which the psychological evaluation of learners is based will be the one which puts the needs of learners first and enhances teaching and learning (inclusive education assessment). This study theoretically foregrounds the eco-systemic approach to assessment and evaluation of learners in schools as its theoretical framework. The purpose of this study is to explore the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics towards the realisation of the goals of inclusive education.

Chapter 4 indicates how the theoretical framework developed in previous chapters has been used to gather valuable data in this study. It further discusses the pilot study, the research approach adopted in this study, reasons for adopting the approach, sampling procedures, different research tools used, and reasons for deciding to use them, how data was produced, coded and collated and finally the conclusion. The research method in this study is understood as the way of proceeding whereas methodology is the theory of knowledge and the interpretative framework guiding a particular research project (van Rooyen, Le Grange & Newmark, n.d.). According to Merriam (1988, p. 6), a research design is “a plan for assembling, organising, and integrating information (data) and it results in a specific end product”. The research design that has been used in this study is a survey research design. This research design was chosen because it has characteristics which suited the aims of this study.

Some of the characteristics of survey research are that it involves sampling. There are also predetermined questions for respondents and responses to questions which form a principal data in a survey research. Findings can also be used to generalise and compare the population from which the sample was drawn (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2000, p.148-149). The choice of a research design depends on the nature of the research questions posed, the degree of control a researcher desires over the events to be studied, and the extent of the focus on contemporary phenomena (Yin, 1984, p.16).

As it applies to any human endeavour, the basic aim of research is to produce answers to questions in a systematic manner. If questionnaires must be used in a research study, it is imperative that they must be correctly and precisely constructed in order to produce valid data for the study. They must be relevant and address the purpose of the research study. In order to ensure correctness and relevance to the study, it is recommended that questionnaires must be piloted before being used in the main study. In this study, questionnaires were piloted before the main study was conducted. The main aim of piloting was for validation purposes. Questionnaires used to produce data in this research underwent several changes in order to address research questions. Finally, a suitable version of the questionnaire was established which was precise and appropriate for use in this research study. After the questionnaires were administered, they were then analysed. The aim of using questionnaires in this research study was to explore the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting.

4.2 REPORT ON THE PILOT STUDY

The aim of the pilot study was to refine the research instruments in order to improve their quality before they could be used in the main study. This is one of the important steps in preparation for the validation of data production techniques. In this study, a pilot study was conducted to check for possible problems in the questionnaire and interview schedule construction, relevancy, ambiguity, time required for completing the questionnaire and answer interview schedule, repetition, grammatical errors, instructions and layout. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 248) say, “If a structured questionnaire is used, enabling patterns to be observed and comparisons to be made, then the questionnaire will need to be piloted and refined so that the final version contains as full a range of possible responses as can be reasonable foreseen”. Table 4.1 below shows pilot sample.

Table 4.1 Pilot sample

Child Guidance Clinics	Questionnaire	Interviews
Child Guidance Clinic 1	4	0
Child Guidance Clinic 2	0	2
Child Guidance Clinic 3	0	1
Child Guidance Clinic 4	2	0
Child Guidance Clinic 5	1	0
TOTAL	7	3

Five child guidance clinics in the Free State Department of Education participated in the pilot study. The aim of the pilot study was explained to all participants and all ethical procedures were followed. Participants were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Four questionnaires were sent to Child Guidance Clinic 1, one to Child Guidance Clinic 5 and two to Child Guidance Clinic 4 for people to complete. Questionnaires were hand-delivered to the participants and an explanation was made on how to fill them. A total of seven (7) questionnaires were administered to seven (7) participants. Each questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Some completed questionnaires were sent back to the researcher by post and others were hand-delivered. All questionnaires which were sent out came back, that means the return rate was 100%.

On the other hand, three (3) interviews were conducted with three (3) participants over a period of two days for approximately 30 minutes each. Two interviews were held at Child Guidance Clinic 2 and one at Child Guidance Clinic 3. Ten (10) participants took part in the pilot study. Participants were randomly selected from different components e.g. Special education, Remedial education, Psychologist, Socio-pedagogue and Speech therapist. This group consisted of two black males, one white male, four black females and three white females. The ages of the participants varied between 25 and 40 years. These 10 participants did not form part of the main research sample. The pilot study was conducted in the same manner as the main study. Questionnaires and interviews that were used in the main study were physically tested on participants during the pilot study.

After the research instruments were validated, the main research study was conducted, which was informed by a survey of the literature, an empirical study and analysis of files of learners who were referred for psychological intervention at Child Guidance Clinic 2. The pilot study gave an indication of how much time and financial expenditure was needed to conduct the research. It also provided the researcher with an idea about the research methodology and data analysis strategies that would be relevant for the study. However, the results of the pilot study do not form part of the results of the main study. The pilot study helped the researcher to refine the data production plan in terms of content and procedure. The results of the pilot study indicated that there were problems with the format, wording and terminology in the questionnaires, which had to be rectified before the main study could be conducted. One of the problems experienced in the questionnaire and interview schedule was that most participants were not yet conversant with inclusive education as it was still at its initial stage of implementation when this research was conducted, especially in the Free State province. EWP6 (2001) is being implemented in different time frames.

The first time frame was between 2001-2003 when it was nationally advocated and plans to convert 30 special schools into Special Schools as Resource Centers (SSRC) and 30 primary schools into Full Service Schools (F/SS) in 30 school districts was implemented. The second major time frame was between (2004-2008) which included transforming further education and training and higher education institutions in order to address diverse needs of learners; especially disabled learners. This time frame also was about expanding the targeted community outreach programmes, expanding the number of SSRC, F/SS District Support Teams. The last time frame is about giving provision to 380 SSRC, 500 F/SS, Colleges, District Support Teams and 280, 000 out-of-school children and youth (DoE, 2001. P 42-43). Participants therefore omitted some of the questions which required them to show a deep understanding of inclusive education. After some changes were made on the questionnaire and the interview schedule, the final versions were then administered in the main study.

4.3 APPROACHES TO RESEARCH

The approaches to research paradigms are discussed. This is to show the rationale behind the use of this methodology.

4.3.1 Positivistic approach

There are at least three paradigms within which research can be conducted. They are the positivistic, phenomenological and the critical paradigms (Ivey, 1986). Each of the paradigms reflects a particular perspective of reality. The positivistic paradigm normally uses methods and procedures that are applied in the natural sciences; hence this approach focuses mainly on quantification. It seems as though only quantitative strategies are operationalised within the positivistic paradigm. The researcher thus sees quantitative methodologies as the application of the theoretical positivistic approach. According to the positivistic approach, every experience can be expressed in terms of statistical figures, equations and graphs. The positivistic paradigm believes in absolute objectivity, a position that is vehemently contested by phenomenology and the critical paradigm (Kuhn, 1970; Turner, 1974; Wagner, 1975; Beard & Morrow, 1981; Lather, 1986). To gain objectivity in positivistic research, methods must be valid and reliable so that the results reveal the “truth”.

This paradigm believes in formulating general and universal laws, like those in the natural sciences. Such laws are based on quantitative results which are in turn used for predicting the outcomes of causes (Lather, 1986; Harvey, 1990; Berg, 1995). Quantitative approach is based on a positivist philosophy which assumes the existence of a single, objective reality which is constant and independent of human beliefs and feelings. Quantitative research approach is directed at analysing cause and effect relationships between selected variables. It is closely linked to statistical methods of data analysis. This approach uses a fixed set of procedures. Such procedures form part of a pre-established research design which is finalised before the data production process takes place (Merriam, 1988, p.18).

The quantitative research method deals with numbers and anything that is measurable. Results are often presented in tables, graphs, or other forms of statistics. Its theoretical base is positivism, which assumes that human constructs can be objectively measured, and uses dependent and independent variables. It assumes that whatever exists can be quantified and scientifically measured. The advantage of using the quantitative approach in this study was that the data produced could be easily coded, summarised and analysed. Data was then used to infer and compare characteristics in different situations. One of the reasons for using quantitative approach in this study was for validation and statistical analysis purposes. Differences between qualitative and quantitative research approaches are on theoretical underpinnings, research design, data processing and presentation.

4.3.2 Some limitations of the positivistic approach

Positivistic approaches in South Africa and other countries where domination by one group over others was the order of the day have been used to mystify and mask information and knowledge under the umbrella of objective facts (Beard & Morrow, 1981). This approach uses general and universal laws in knowledge production, which it then applies to the study of human beings. If this happens, the unfortunate part is that then human beings are treated as objects in a natural science laboratory. Quantitative methodologies involve controlling of variables so that the effect of the treatment factor can become clear and unconfounded in the research (Ivey, 1986). The argument raised is that in quantitative research, the researcher is the only “subject” while the researched are treated as quantifiable objects. The question of attempting to produce absolutely objective knowledge about human beings destroys the human dynamism (that enables the researched not to be static but to retain what is essentially human, that is subjectness).

Critical theory argues that positivistic approaches miss the point because they can never be absolutely objective, especially when studying human beings, as they too interpret the fluidity of human experiences in a particular way which is not necessarily neutral (Held, 1983).

4.3.3 Critical approach

As opposed to the positivistic approach, critical and phenomenological researchers do not believe in quantifying especially human experiences. Their argument is based on the fact that human beings are dynamic beings and that their experiences cannot be treated as those of objects in a natural laboratory (Harvey, 1990). Critical and phenomenological researchers maintain that all research is value-laden and that human beings should be studied through certain methodologies that respect and enhance their subjectivity. According to this view, all research is mounted on particular ideological orientations. For a society to function properly and be productive and for people live in harmony there has to be an exercise of power in one way or another. When this power is exercised beyond the limit, human beings experience domination. It is at this point that critical research produces knowledge that critiques and questions surplus power or domination.

The position of critical research is to emancipate and liberate human beings from an ideologically distorted conception of reality. The critical approach allows for the subjectiveness of the researched as they speak on their own behalf. This approach does not aim to control variables or formulate general and universal laws for purposes of prediction, but to liberate and emancipate the oppressed. It critiques power as overt or covert. According to this approach, objectivity is not paramount and that there is no such thing as truth since truth is not one thing but an ever increasing complexity (Lather, 1986). According to Dana (1999, p.37), critical “qualitative research approaches are distinguished by a reliance on verbal reports, descriptions, and interpretations of events”. It is often said to be naturalistic and phenomenological in its approach. It acknowledges the existence of multiple realities due to the dynamic nature of human beings. Its goal is to understand behaviour in its natural setting.

The philosophical bases of qualitative research are found in *phenomenology*, *ethno-methodology*, and *naturalistic behaviourism*. Its methods are derived from *ethnography* and *anthropology*. Methods classified as qualitative are participant observation, direct observation, unstructured interviewing, case studies, content analysis and focus groups.

Data production techniques used by qualitative researchers include open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents (Wikipedia, n.d.). Peck and Furman (1992, p 2) state that qualitative research describes social phenomena using concepts that “preserve the organisation, interpretations, and meaning of phenomena as constructed by the individuals involved”. This study critically looks at the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in the Free State child guidance clinics with the aim to understand psychological evaluation practices within the walls of the positivistic approach, hence the use of the critical approach. It further empowers the researcher and the researched about the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context.

4.3.4 An integrated approach

In the social sciences a number of research approaches and data production techniques are available for use. It then becomes a complex process to choose an approach or technique. A number of factors affect this process, e.g. the research problem, aims of the research, money required, limitations of an approach or a technique, time, the researcher himself/herself, and the research setting. Considering all these factors, the researcher then decided to make use of both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches to present and interpret the data produced. Their strong points are synthesised into one triangulating strategy. This was used to critically answer the research questions. The two approaches are used in this study to complement each other. The quantitative research approach has been used in this study to examine the assessment tools objectively, while the qualitative approach gives a more in-depth view of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context.

Once a research design has been chosen, data production tools are the next consideration. In this study data was produced through secondary and primary sources. Primary data was produced through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, file analysis and interaction with the participants so as to get their real-life experiences about the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners, while secondary data was produced by means of printed media like books, journal articles, dissertations and theses, and Internet searches. A synthesis of the literature review, research instruments and theoretical framework is provided in the chapters to follow.

4.3.5 The practicalities of an integrated approach in this study

An integrated approach shows how the study makes use of quantitative and qualitative approaches to arrive at meaningful interpretation of the data produced. Quantitatively orientated instruments used in this study were a structured questionnaire and learners' files. Questionnaires were used to find out about preference of assessment tools used, types of assessment tools and information about assessors. The second instrument was used to find out what really happened during assessment. The two complemented each other by indicating the relationship, if any, between the preferred tool and the one eventually used.

The qualitative discourse analysis strategy as it is favoured by Fairclough and Thompson in Thompson (1982) has also been operationalised. Semi-structured interviews were used as a qualitative strategy, to understand the views of participants about the use of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context. The two approaches produced a clearer picture of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education system. Issues which could not be clarified by the quantitative approach were best addressed by the qualitative approach. In keeping with the above, this study has produced data analyses and interprets them in two stages, viz. quantitative and qualitative. The paragraphs to follow discuss the operationalisation of the respective research approaches.

4.4 APPROACH ADOPTED AND JUSTIFICATION

This study presents and interprets data from three contradictory approaches, viz. the positivistic, critical emancipator and textually orientated discourse analysis. Data production techniques used includes qualitative and quantitative methods like questionnaires, open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews. The triangulation method was used in this study to validate results and get a complete picture of the assessment and evaluation of learners by Free State child guidance clinics (Schulze, 2003). This study regards the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods as a means of increasing scope, depth and consistency in the methodological proceedings, rather than contestation.

4.5 STAGE ONE: QUANTITATIVE OPERATIONALISATION

This section of the study describes measurable research properties used in this thesis, sample and geographical location of the study.

4.5.1 Sampling

4.5.1.1 Geographic location of the sample

This study was conducted in the Free State province in South Africa. The target population for the study was five Free State child guidance clinics. According to Shaughnessy *et al.* (2000, p. 150), “A population is the set of all cases of interest”. These clinics were chosen as research sites because schools, parents and health professionals referred learners to them for educational and psychological intervention up to 18 years of age and they all had the characteristics needed to conduct this research. Referred learners were from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Once learners have been assessed and evaluated, a report with recommendation(s) is sent to the one who referred the learner, e.g. a school or a health professional.

The term target population is used in this study to refer to all five Free State child guidance clinics’ professional staff. These clinics are located all over the Free State, on average 290 km apart. Their staffs consist of a variety of specialists like psychologists, school social workers, speech therapists, special education specialists, and remedial specialists. The designations for special education specialists and remedial specialists in the Free State changed in 2003 after the introduction of EWP6 (2001). They are now called senior education specialists. Due to time constraints and the unavailability of some members of the child guidance clinics, the accessible population was used as the research population. Since this study was designed to be a survey research, the research population became a survey population.

4.5.1.2 Size of sample

All members of the five child guidance clinics qualified to be participants in the study because of the nature of their work. The clinics were the research sites where data was produced. Members of the child guidance clinics are all specialists in their different fields, such as psychologists, school social workers, special education and remedial specialists (now senior education specialists) and speech therapists.

They differed according to their job designations. The participants had different characteristics which Du Plooy (1995, p. 50) calls “population parameters”. Not all members were reached, as some were no longer based at the clinics following restructuring in the districts due to the implementation of EWP6. Nevertheless, a total number of 33 members were reached and they took part as research participants. Taking all the abovementioned points into consideration, the researcher had to depend on the accessible sample and elements for the purposes of this study.

Careful selection of a survey sample is of vital importance as it influences production of data and consequently the quality of the study. If a sample is not carefully selected, that might lead to a bias sample. A bias sample is the one in which the characteristics of the sample are systematically different from the characteristics of the population. Selection bias of the population occurs when there is overrepresentation or underrepresentation of some segments of the population. Once the sample has been identified, chosen from the sample frame, it is also important to select elements/participants for the study. Data produced from the survey elements or sample is used to describe the larger population. The ability to generalise from a sample to the population depends critically on the representativeness of the sample (Shaughnessy *et al.*, 2000).

For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was recommended as relevant for answering the research critical questions. Purposive sampling is used in instances where there are cases of interest to the researcher (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Robson, 2002). In a survey research, the interconnectedness between population, sampling frame, sample and element is of vital importance. All of the abovementioned points were taken care of in this study. Sample size is one of the crucial parts of research as it determines accuracy of the research population and validity of results. It is therefore important that a correct sample be used which represents a real population. Selection of sampling type must satisfy the aims of the study. In this study there was no need to sample the population per se because all members of the Free State child guidance clinics qualified to be included in the research population. Another reason was that the whole research population could be managed well.

The use of purposive sampling was relevant in this study because it addressed the aims of the study. After it was concluded that purposive sampling was going to inform this study, it was also decided to use questionnaires, file analysis and interviews as data production tools for the study. These data production tools were then subdivided into quantitative and qualitative tools. Interviews were classified under qualitative tools while file analysis and questionnaires were regarded as quantitative tools.

In the questionnaire there was a section about the biographical information of the participants which will be discussed in the following sections and graphically represented and analysed in Chapter 5. Themes which were revealed through the use of the questionnaire will also be discussed.

4.5.2 Questionnaires

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to produce data about psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context. Further details are discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

4.5.2.1 Gender and race groups.

The research questionnaire used in this study has a section A which required participants to indicate their gender and race groups. The section on gender and race was included in the questionnaire because these issues have a direct impact on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The gender of an assessor plays a role in the assessment of learners especially in the elementary phase. Most learners at this phase prefer to interact with females rather than males. The race of an assessor also plays a role in the sense that both assessors and assessed bring to the assessment process their cultural experiences. The issue of gender and race is clearly illustrated and discussed in Chapter 5.

4.5.2.2 Age

It was important to indicate the age categories of participants in this study, because age has an influence on the philosophical understanding and conceptualisation of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by assessors. It is assumed that the older an assessor is, the more he/she is experienced in learner assessment and evaluation. Age was used in this study because it is interesting to look at the working life span of the assessors before their retirement age. According to the researcher, the age of assessors could have had an influence on the way they responded to research questions.

4.5.2.3 Language and culture

Language and culture are important aspects in the assessment and evaluation of learners. It is therefore important to indicate which language(s) is/are mostly used by assessors as against the languages that are used by learners.

Language and culture have a great impact in the assessment and evaluation of learners which eventually affect the evaluation results. These are important aspects in the assessment and evaluation of learners.

4.5.2.4 Academic qualifications

This study also looked at the academic qualifications of assessors. This part of the questionnaire was included to check whether participants have relevant qualifications for conducting psychological assessment and evaluation. The study also investigated how participants' qualifications enhanced their performance in the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners.

4.5.2.5 Reasons for working at the clinic

It was also important to indicate why the research participants in this study decided to work at the Free State child guidance clinics. Their skills and qualifications might be motivating factors, since a passion for psychological intervention and love for children who experience barriers to learning and development could drive them to work at the clinics.

4.5.2.6 Psychological assessment tests and techniques

Psychological assessment is a very wide concept. It was not the intention of this study to look at this concept in totality, but to focus on psychological tests and techniques used at the Free State child guidance clinics. Psychological tests used at the clinics were classified as mental ability, personality, speech and audiology tests. Mental ability tests are used to assess intellectual abilities while personality tests are for personality assessment. Speech and audiology tests are used to assess speech and hearing.

4.5.3 File analysis

The files of learners were assessed at the Bethlehem child guidance clinic were accessed. These learners were referred by schools, parents, health professionals like medical doctors, psychologists or occupational therapists in private practice. Assessment at the clinic was conducted by various specialists. Analysis of learners file is provided in Chapter 5.

4.6 STAGE 2: QUALITATIVE OPERATIONALISATION

This section discusses the semi-structured interview as a data production tool in this study. Data collected is presented and analysed using textually orientated discourse analysis, and qualitative research methodology is operationalised.

Qualitative research understands actions and institutions as social constructions rather than the product of external factors which mould people in ways that can be predicted (Vulliamy, Lewin & Stephens, 1990, p.8). This research approach tries to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the research participant and understanding the meanings people give to their experiences. It also tries to understand the research sample, rather than generalising from the research population. It emphasises fieldwork and is described as holistic. Qualitative researchers believe in studying phenomena in their entirety rather than concentrating on narrow aspects of the phenomena defined as “independent or dependent variables” (Wikipedia, n.d.). Qualitative research acknowledges the existence of multiple human realities which means that when human behaviour is assessed, multiple assessment methods must be used. This statement is in congruent with the use of multiple psychological evaluation methods in the evaluation of learners, especially in an inclusive education setting.

A researcher who uses the qualitative approach seeks to understand his/her participants from their own frame of reference. Assessors who use the qualitative approach in psychological assessment understand that psychological testing alone is not an answer to the psychological constructs being assessed. It then becomes clear that psychological assessment based on a qualitative approach is a possible solution to the problems inherent in the testing model. Qualitative research understands that human performance is highly sensitive to context. A learner’s performance cannot be understood simply as a characteristic of the individual, but rather as a characteristic of the individual in interaction with others in a specific activity; that is, a problem in performance or learning “disability” is socially constructed. The same applies to the philosophy that every learner can learn and achieve provided the learning environment is conducive for learning to take place. Assessment methods should be multidimensional and consider social processes that affect the performance of a learner. Such an approach counteracts the psychometric approach which believes in psychological testing (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999, p.125-126). The goal of using a qualitative research approach is to fully understand the essence of the phenomenon. In this study, data production was done through personal interviews, questionnaires and file analysis.

Creswell (2003, p.30) says,

One of the main reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory. This means that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas.

In the process of trying to explore the “how and why” of the assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics, the researcher described and interpreted data produced during the research process through the qualitative approach. It then became evident that the qualitative approach was indeed relevant to this study. In explaining the importance of the qualitative approach, Dana (1999, p.37) says, “*The real benefit of most qualitative approaches is that they disclose the richness of human experience... qualitative research uses an open system view in that any information gathered is of no fixed variety.*” All qualitative information produced during the research process by means of the research instruments was used in this study. The aim of this study was to explore the psychological evaluation of learners towards the realisation of the goals of inclusive education. Against this background the researcher decided to make use of the qualitative research approach in order to answer the research-critical questions and achieve the aims of the study.

4.6.1 Research instruments

Adding to questionnaires and file audit, a semi-structured interview was also used to produce data in this study. As a qualitative research instrument, one of the advantages a semi-structured interview in a research is that research participants are able to express themselves freely. The researcher can then follow up for clarifications and explanations. At the end of the interview, the researcher is able to get a deeper understanding and rich data. Interviews were analysed using textually orientated discourse analysis.

4.6.1.1 Sampling

A total of 12 individual interviews were conducted in a period of three weeks with intervals. The interviews lasted from 30 to 45 minutes per participant. The reason for conducting individual interviews was to produce genuine primary data to answer the research-critical questions. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed.

All these interviews were audio taped, transcribed and notes taken where possible. Participants were purposefully selected because they had all the characteristics needed in this research. The interview atmosphere was relaxed and informal, unlike in the formal interviews. Participants were free to express their understanding of the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting.

4.6.1.2 Data collection

Interviews were used as a face-to-face data production strategy with research participants. The advantage of using interviews is to produce rich data and gain a deeper insight in the subject under investigation. In this study, the researcher was able to get primary data from experts on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. An interview can be used in different ways and for different purposes; hence it can be defined in different ways. A psychological evaluation interview differs from other evaluation tools in the sense that it is an encounter between two (or more) persons; it is a face-to-face, professional conversation with a specific purpose (Burger, 1996, p.7). It is a data gathering strategy through direct reciprocal communication. This means that there is communication between an interviewer and an interviewee. The aim of the conversation is to elicit valuable information that can be used in a research study. The researcher initiates the interview with a specific purpose, viz. to produce data for answering research questions (Cohen, Swerdlik & Smith, 1992, p.14).

In this study, arrangements were made with research participants beforehand to conduct interviews with them. Rapport was established with the participants and they were told of the background and aims of the interviews and the purpose of the study. The researcher explained to the participants that at that time he was a researcher, because they knew him as a colleague. During the interview process, the researcher was aware of biases and subjectivity and eliminated them. This happened for each and every interview conducted. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the members of the Free State child guidance clinics and also with those who had knowledge and experience of the psychological evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting. Participants were asked similar questions at all the child guidance clinics. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used because they related well with the aims of the study and they allowed the researcher the flexibility to make follow ups and ask probing questions where it was necessary.

Merriam (1988, p.72) states:

“We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organised the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world, we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective”.

Interviews in this study were used to get the views of participants about the use of psychological evaluation in an inclusive education context. They served as a data production tool to get research participants’ beliefs and attitudes about the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The interviews were tape-recorded so that the interviewer could focus on listening and responding to the interviewee. This was done to avoid interruptions during the interview process. Recording enabled the interviewer to capture the whole interview for data analysis purposes. The recorded interview could later be transcribed verbatim with the focus being more on content (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1997). The tape-recorded data was analysed through notes made while playing back the recorded interviews. The researcher would listen to the recorded conversation and make notes on particular sections of interests and do further analysis. The researcher also considered the feelings and meanings of interviewees and meaningfully communicated these on paper (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). These interviews were used together with other data production strategies like questionnaires and file analysis in order to establish validity (methodological triangulation).

4.6.1.3 Analysis of data

Content analysis was used as a data analysis strategy. This strategy is used for the categorisation of verbal data, for purposes of classification, summarising and tabulation. The content was analysed on two levels, namely the descriptive and the interpretative level. Descriptive analysis is where data is described; that means what was actually said with nothing read into and/or assumed about it. Interpretative data analysis is about what was meant by the participants, inferred or implied. This level of data analysis is sometimes called the latent level of analysis. In the content analysis, all data was coded and classified. This strategy was used to identify from the transcripts the extracts of data that were informative in the interviews.

During the content analysis, data was continually revisited and reviewed until the researcher was certain that the themes and categories used to summarise and describe the findings were the true reflection of the data produced. Content analysis goes beyond what was verbally said by the participants. It continually interrogates data to level above the participants' understandings. Textually oriented discourse analysis (TODA) was also used in the data analysis procedure. It focuses on the actual text of what the participants say in interviews, in order to make statements about the discursive practices informing these discourses Fairclough (1992). This strategy of interrogating the conversations of the participants is useful as it uses what the participants say as evidence. This means listening and reading the actual words they say as "text".

The argument is that words are a reflection of one's inner feelings which in turn are a reflection of the discursive practices within which an individual person's meaning construction is generated and created (Nkoane, 2006). The researcher listened with understanding to what the participants said and contextualised their experiences about the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners, and relates it to the goals of inclusive education. Conclusions were based on the findings about the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation practices in an inclusive education setting. Evidence for verifying the finding was supplied on the basis of the actual words of the participants.

4.6.1.4 Critique and justification

Fairclough (1992), Duncan (1993), Mahlomaholo (1998) and Nkoane (2006) have shown how modern research in the social and human sciences is increasingly using discourse analysis as a research strategy. This study supports this strategy, because unlike in quantitative research, the status of human beings as dynamic subjects and as full-fledged humans is recognised and respected in discourse analytic research. The voices of the researched are heard and amplified. Nobody speaks on behalf of the researched as if they are objects in the science laboratory. This strategy therefore enhances the emancipation and empowerment of the researched. The criticisms levelled against this strategy are that no research is absolutely objective and does not involve and include the opinion of the researcher in one way or another. The researcher always decides which problem will be investigated, which methodologies of data production and analysis are most appropriate and important, what interpretation can be given to the data and findings, irrespective of whether the research is positivistic or emancipatory (cf. Chapter 6 of Mahlomaholo, 1998). The findings of this study need not be generalised beyond the researched because the theoretical grounding of this research does not generate general laws in order to predict human behaviour. On the contrary it argues for sensitivity to human subjectiveness.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 has provided a report on the pilot study which was conducted in five Free State child guidance clinics before the main study was conducted. The pilot study was conducted in order to validate the research tools which were used in the main study. Changes were made to the research instruments and a final version was used in the main study. Different specialists conduct educational and psychological interventions in these clinics with learners who experience barriers to learning and development.

In this chapter, the emphasis was on the research design and procedures that were followed in the study. The survey research approach was employed. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches were briefly described together with the reasons for their selection for the study. This chapter has indicated how positivistic and critical approaches were triangulated in this thesis. Triangulation was applied to reduce the risk of systematic distortions inherent in using only one methodology. The use of two research approaches added breadth and depth to the analysis of results. Triangulation in this study enabled the researcher to increase the scope and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches were operationalised and data analysed. Purposive sampling was used in this study because all participants had relevant characteristics for inclusion in the study. Research tools that are used in the quantitative stage are questionnaires and file analysis, while interviews were used in the qualitative stage. The questionnaire used in the study yielded themes like gender, race, age, language, culture, academic qualifications, reasons for working at the clinic, psychological assessment tests and techniques. These data production tools were discussed and an explanation was given of how they complemented each other and their relevance to the study.

CHAPTER 5

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 analyses and presents findings and interpretations of the data from samples drawn from five Free State child guidance clinics. All the research participants were selected from these clinics. Structured questionnaires and the files of learners who were referred to the Bethlehem child guidance clinic for psychological intervention were used as quantitative data production tools. The structured questionnaire targeted all clinics personnel who psychologically assessed learners, and was designed to investigate how learners are psychologically assessed and evaluated by the Free State child guidance clinics. The questionnaire focused on the qualifications and experience of assessors, the psychological tests or techniques used selection and preference for tests and their effectiveness in realising the goals of inclusive education.

The questionnaire instrument was relevant and scientific to this thesis. Some of the main questions used were: “Why did you decide to work at a child guidance clinic?”; “What is the purpose of assessment and evaluation the way you do it?” and “What criterion/criteria does the child guidance clinic use to select particular techniques?” Data presented in Chapter 4 is a snapshot of the opinions and experiences of assessors that can be regarded as reliable, valid and representative. The questionnaire was able to show that assessors are better qualified to do their work. Data produced also showed which psychological assessment tests are used at the clinics and that the assessment and evaluation of learners is not compatible with the goals of inclusive education. The questionnaire also looked at the role of the child guidance clinic in an inclusive education setting. Assessors were not certain about their role, as inclusive education was still in its infancy and clinics were hence not working in an inclusive education manner.

5.2 SUBJECTS, PROCEDURES AND RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS (QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS)

The questionnaire elicited the biographical details of assessors as well as information on their experience, training and additional aspects. The instrument was hand-delivered to all participants. It consisted of a four-page questionnaire containing two sections.

Each participant took responsibility for completing the questionnaire. The first page of the questionnaire contained an invitation to participate in the research study and explained that information gathered would be treated with high confidentiality. Child guidance clinics and therapists were identified as relevant institutions and participants for this study. Data gathered included demographics, participants' qualifications, reasons for working at a child guidance clinic, experiences on psychological assessment of learners, and the aims and use of psychological tests. General comments were invited in the final open-ended question.

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used. Questionnaires contained both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions required participants to answer "Yes" or "No", "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Uncertain", and "Disagree". Quantitative data were analysed descriptively and statistically. Open-ended questions were analysed thematically using standard inductive techniques. The critical qualitative emancipator approach was more orientated towards the perspective of the researched and how they contextualised psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The qualitative research approach was used in an open and flexible manner. The main purpose of using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches (triangulation) in this study was to crosscheck the findings.

5.4 RESULTS

After a brief summary of the structured questionnaire, its results will be discussed under four sections: biographical data, experiences of psychological assessment, qualifications and open-ended questions.

5.4.1 Response to the questionnaire

Responses were received from five Free State child guidance clinics and 84% of the questionnaires distributed were returned. Names of clinics were indicated on the completed questionnaire to ascertain representativeness. All categories of assessors were represented in all the clinics. In tabulating data, an N value has been used to indicate the number of participants responding to a particular question.

5.4.2 Academic qualifications of participants

Data produced through the use of questionnaires indicated that all Free State child guidance clinic personnel had relevant qualifications for conducting psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. A majority of them had B.A., M.A. Psychology, B.Soc and M.Soc, M.Ed and B.A. Hons. Psychology as illustrated in Figure 5.1 below. Their qualifications made them suitable for assisting learners who experience barriers to learning and development. When asked: “Why did you decide to work at a child guidance clinic?” a response from one of the therapists was “I prefer to work with children and adolescents. The qualifications that I have made me to have confidence on how to assist children who experience learning difficulties.”

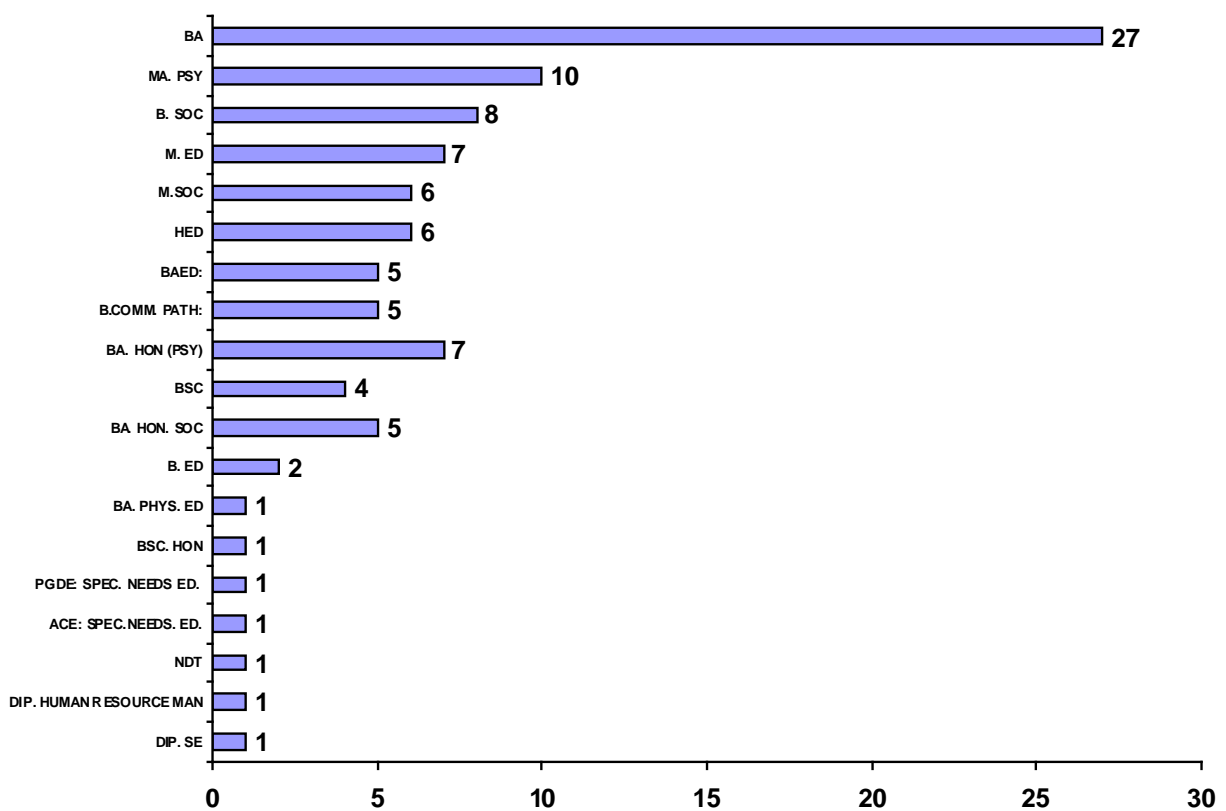


Figure 5.1: Academic qualifications

5.4.3 Age category

The age categories of participants in this study are important because age might have an influence on the philosophical understanding and conceptualisation of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by assessors. Figure 5.2 indicates how many participants have still more years to practice psychological assessment and evaluation of learners before their retirement age.

The figure shows that when the study was conducted, 27% of the participants were in the 35-39 age group; while 18% of them were in the 30-49 age group. This shows that a majority of the participants are still within the working age group. The 35-39 age group still have more years to practice psychological evaluation before they reach the retirement age. It is inferred that this age group was schooled in the medical discourse of psychological intervention. This then has an influence on how they understood a learning breakdown, assessed learners and suggested a plan of action. Only 3% of the 55-59 age group were represented and there were no participants for the age categories 25-29 and 60-65, that the majority of participants were below the age of 50 could have influenced the way they responded to research questions.

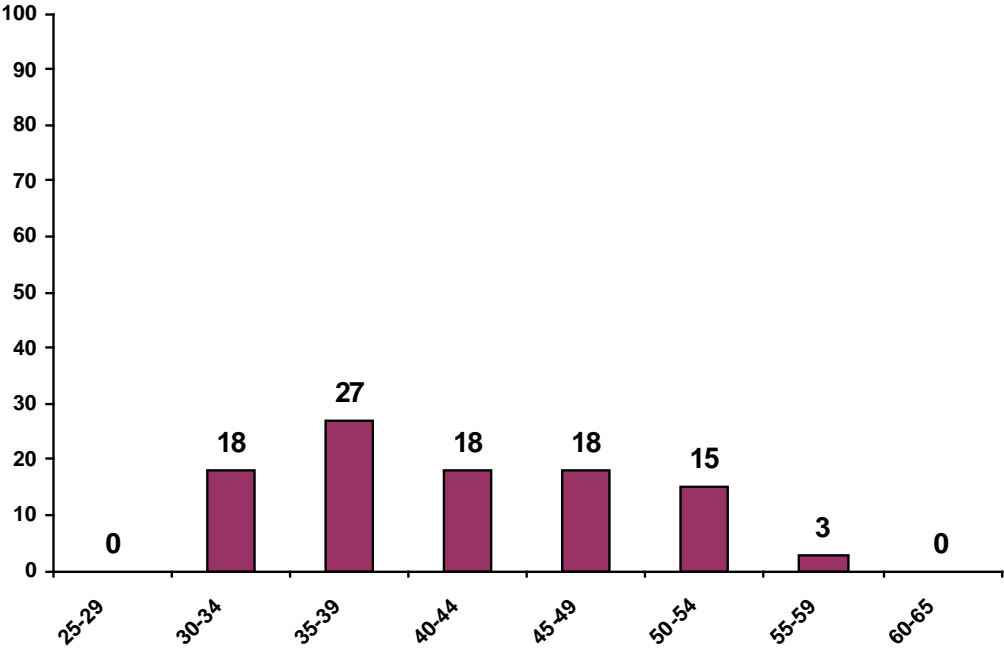


Figure 5.2: Age groups

5.4.4 Gender and race groups

Figure 5.3 shows that the 30-34 age group was dominated by males at 27% while females formed 14%. There were more blacks (21%) than whites who formed 16% in this category. In the 35-39 age group, males formed 36% against females who were at 23%; blacks dominated this group by 50% over whites who formed 11%. The 40-44 age group was dominated by whites at 26% over blacks who formed 7%. In the same age group, females were at 23% while males were at 9%.

Females dominated the age group 45-49 by 23% over males who were at 9%. In this age group, blacks were at 21% over whites who formed 16%. In the age group 50-54, whites were at 26% and there were no blacks. Males dominated this group by 18% while females were at 14%. The last group, 55-59, consisted of whites and females at an equal 5%; there were no males and black participants. Data produced in section A of the questionnaire seems to show that females dominate over their male counterparts. This study indicates that there are more female than male assessors in the Free State child guidance clinics. This might be because females are more passionate than males about working with learners who experience barriers to learning and development. On the category of race, the white assessors are the predominant group. This means that whites assessed most learners rather than blacks (see Table 5.5 on file audit of learners). This ratio imbalance has a great influence on language and culture during the assessment and evaluation process. It may be concluded that in the Free State Child Guidance Clinics, assessment and white females dominate evaluation of learners.

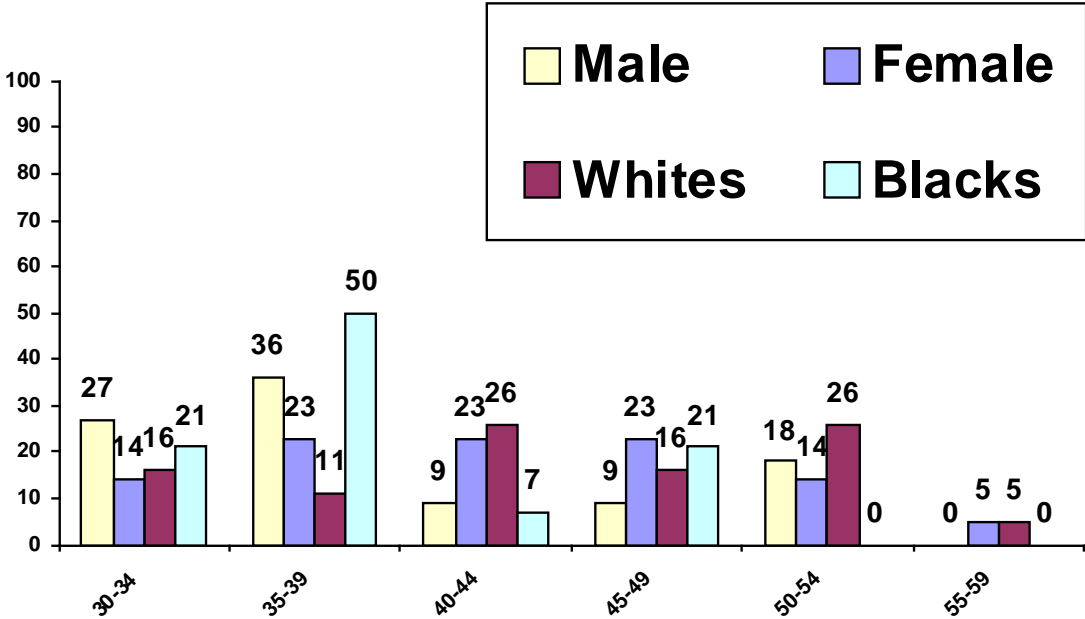


Figure 5.3: Males/Females and race groups

5.4.5 Language and culture

Figure 5.4 shows the first and second languages most spoken by the research participants.

This is important to note because it influences the assessment and evaluation process between the assessor and the assessed. Language and culture play a vital role in psychological evaluation. The figure shows that 88% of the participants speak English as their second language and 58% speak Afrikaans as their first language. IsiZulu is spoken by 9% as the first language and 3% as second language. It is also important to note that 18% speak Southern Sotho as their first language and 9% as second language. Northern Sotho is spoken by 3% as the first language and IsiXhosa is spoken by 12% as the first language. No one indicated English as his/her first language, Afrikaans as second language, Northern Sotho as second language and IsiXhosa as second language. This shows that Afrikaans-speaking assessors assessed a majority of learners. Learners who were not Afrikaans speaking were being disadvantaged in the assessment process.

This study also shows that assessors and learners have different cultures. Both groups come to the assessment process with their cultural experiences and perceptions of the way things must be done. In such a scenario, the question of assessment fairness and validity in context becomes an important issue. It can then safely be said that during the assessment process, there was a lot of bias in respect of language and culture. It is important to note these factors as they influence the assessment and evaluation process between the assessor and learners. Language and culture play a vital role in psychological evaluation.

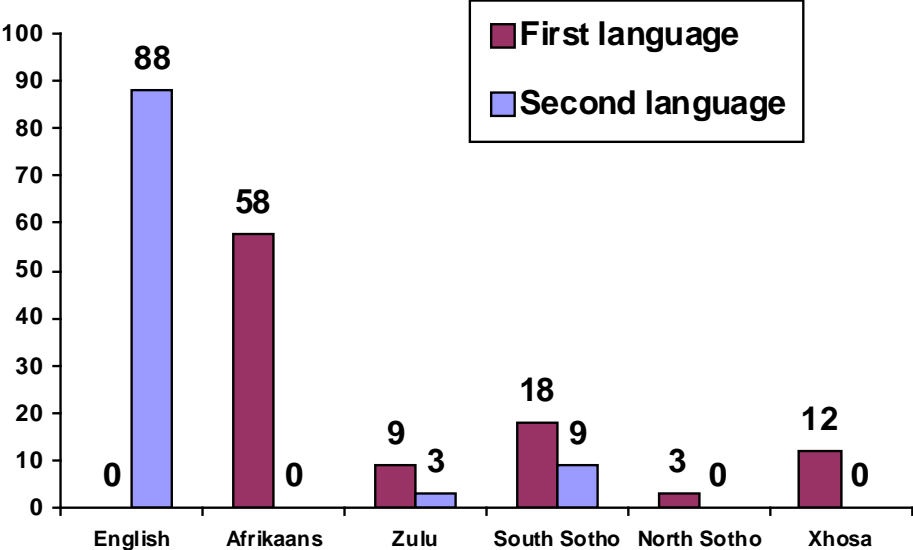


Figure 5.4: Language and culture

5.4.6 Positions of specialists at the clinics

Figure 5.5 shows a graphical representation of specialists working at the clinics. This figure indicates which specialists are in the majority in the clinics, indicating that they dominate the assessment and evaluation of learners. A total number of 24% of the participants consisted of remedial specialists and psychologists while 18% were special education specialists, 21% socio-pedagogues and only 12% speech therapists and audiologists. Speech therapists, audiologists and socio-pedagogues were the least in the sample because they were very few in all the clinics. This does not mean that their work is less important than others; it is just that few were employed by the Free State Department of Education.

The primary function of Remedial specialists at the clinics is to give support to learners who need remediation. Such learners might be experiencing learning restraints in listening and spoken language, writing, reading, spelling, mathematics, behaviour and study problems. Special education specialists on the other hand support learners with neurological, physiological and genetic handicaps. These learners are first diagnosed by a health specialist like a medical doctor or a neurologist and referred to the clinic for academic support. Special education specialists also facilitate provision of learning programme to schools and train teachers on how to support learners with handicaps (Kapp, 1991).

The research sample in this study indicated that psychologists and remedial specialists were predominant. Psychologists are the ones that select and use psychological tests for psychological intervention. Other specialists were very few and in some of the Free State child guidance clinics there were none, causing problems when a learner had to be assessed by a speech therapist, for instance. The shortage of specialists in the Free State child guidance clinics compromises psychological assessment. This problem needs to be attended to by the Department of Education as a matter of urgency.



Figure 5.5 Categories of specialists at the clinics

5.4.7 Participation per clinic

Figure 5.6 provides an illustrative indication of responses from the five Free State child guidance clinics. These are the research sites where data was produced. Participants at the Bethlehem child guidance clinic were more than willing to take part in the study. This might be because the researcher was working at this clinic, so they were more motivated to be part of the study than other clinics, as it is illustrated in Figure 5.6. This could have had a bias effect despite the fact that the researcher guarded against such an effect. It must, however, be mentioned that the uneven participation of clinics in this study did not compromise the validation of data produced.

Sample Details : Regions of Participation

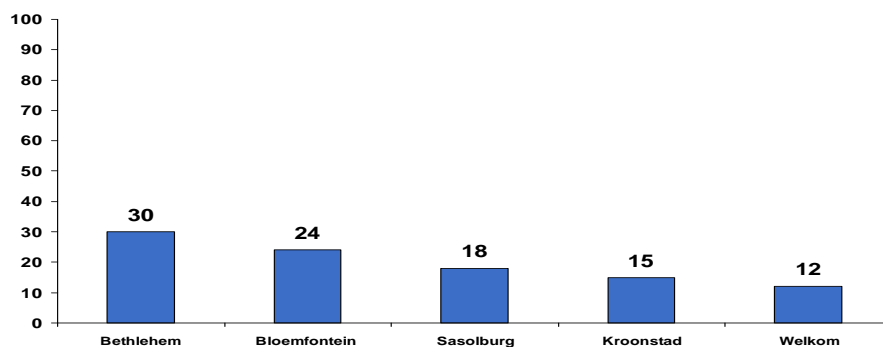


Figure 5.6 Responses from Free State child guidance clinics

5.4.8 Reasons for working at the clinic

Figure 5.7 shows why participants decided to work at the clinics and not in other sectors or departments. Figure 5.7 shows that the majority of participants decided to work at the clinics because they wanted to help educators and parents to help learners who experienced barriers to learning and development. They indicated that they wanted to apply their skills and they had a passion for working with young children in need. The reasons provided show that these are the relevant people to work with learners who experience barriers to learning and development.

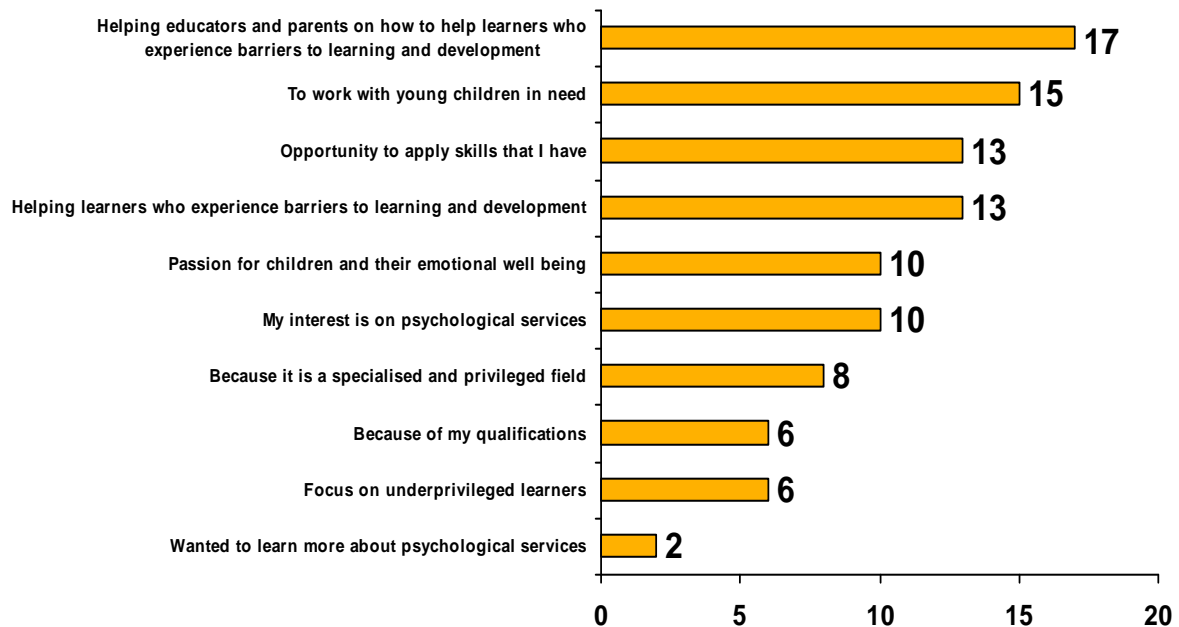


Figure 5.7 Motivation for working at the clinic

5.4.9 Groups of psychological tests

For the purpose of this study, tests used at the child guidance clinics are grouped into three groups. These are:

5.4.9.1 Individual and group Intelligence Tests

These tests are used by psychologists to measure what is called ‘Intelligence Quotient’ (IQ). There are different language versions as according to the South African population. One example of an individual intelligence test is the Senior South African Individual Scale –Revised (SSAIS-R). The age norm for this test is 16 years (Kapp, 1991).

5.4.9.2 Motor Ability Tests

Motor ability tests are used by psychologists and occupational therapists. These tests measure what is called motor functionality. Different tests are used to measure fine or gross motor. An example of a motor ability test is Bender Gestalt. This test, although it indicates the mental function of a person, is designed to measure motor ability. In some cases, therapists might decide to use motor activities to assess gross motor development (Lehmann and Mehrens, 1991).

5.4.9.3 Personality Assessment Tests

These assessment measures are used by psychologists to assess personality. A set of questions (questionnaire) or structured self-report inventories are administered to a person so as to quantify and explain his/her personality. They are the basic tool in the diagnosis of 'illness', whether it be physical or mental. One of the questionnaires used at the Free State child guidance clinics is the South African Personality Questionnaire (SAPQ) (Lehmann and Mehrens, 1991).

The paragraphs to follow will show different assessment tests and techniques for different modalities. Participants were asked to rate these tests and techniques according to their preferences.

5.4.10 Mental ability tests and assessment techniques

5.4.10.1 Mental ability tests

According to Figure 5.8, most assessors rated ASB at 36% as good followed by PPG (30%), Draw a person was at (24%), Group test (21%) and Ravens (15%). Some of the assessors rated the same tests as poor. Draw a person was rated poor at 18%, Group test and Ravens were rated poor at 15%, PPG 9% and ASB at 21%. It is important to highlight that while some assessors rated these tests good, others rated them average. On average, the Draw a person test was rated at 27%, Group test and Ravens at 18%, PPG 24% and ASB at 15%.

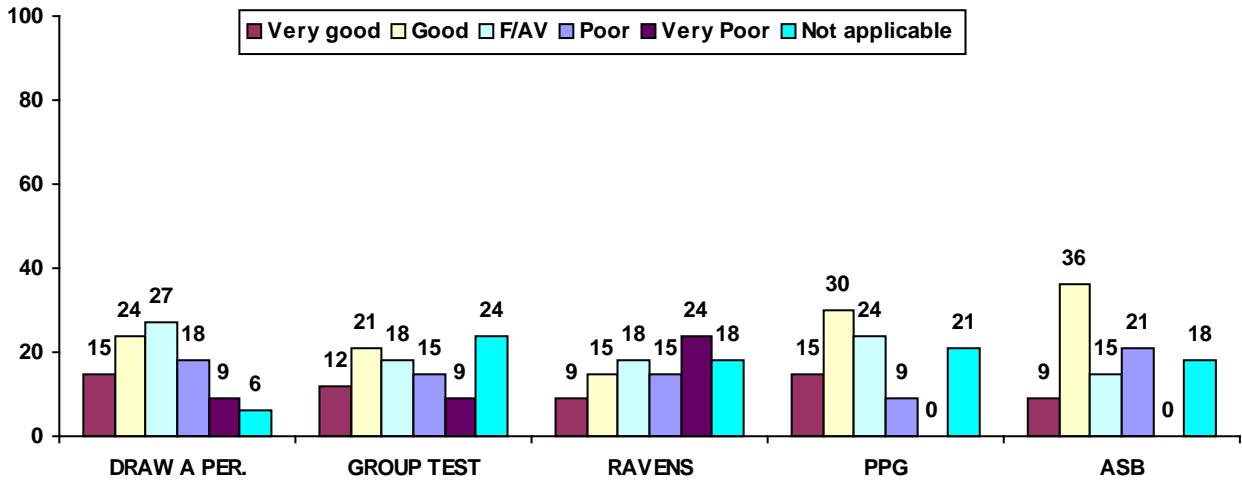


Figure 5.8 Rating of mental ability tests (a)

In Figure 5.9 below, SSAIS-R was rated good at 48%, followed by BENDER at (36%), PPG (30%), JSAIS (27%), GROVER (18%), RAVENS (15%) and IGSSA (6%). SSAIS-R was also rated very good at 27%, BENDER (18%), JSAIS and PPG were rated at 15%, GROVER, IGSSA and RAVENS were all rated at 9% each. Interesting enough SSAIS-R was rated average at 9%, JSAIS and IGSSA at (33%), BENDER (15%), GROVER and PPG at (24%) and RAVENS at (18%).

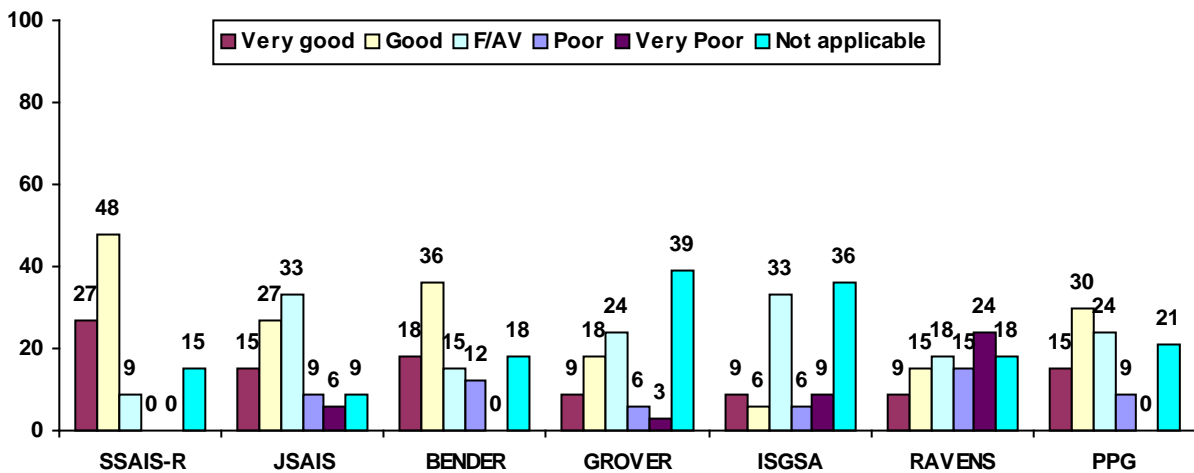


Figure 5.9 Rating of mental ability tests (b)

5.4.10.2 Assessment techniques

Figure 5.10 below shows assessment tools which are used by assessors for personality evaluation. It is important to bring in this data, as some learners needed personality evaluation in order to enhance their scholastic performance or plan their career path. Figure 5.10 shows that SAPQ was rated good at 30%, JPQ (24%), 19-FII (27%), JAT (21%), SSHA and HSPQ (18%) and 16PF (15%). On the other hand, SAPQ was rated very good at 21%, JPQ and 19-FII at (18%), JAT and SSHA (12%) and HSPQ and 16PF at (9%). On average SAPQ and JAT were rated at 27%, JPQ (30%), 19-FII and 16PF (24%), SSHA and HSPQ (21%). This figure shows a small difference between rating an instrument good and average. It might be that participants were uncertain about whether an instrument was good or not. Another reason could have been that in the questionnaire a respondent had to give a reason for choosing “poor”. Most participants might have avoided giving a reason and so they decided to choose “average”.

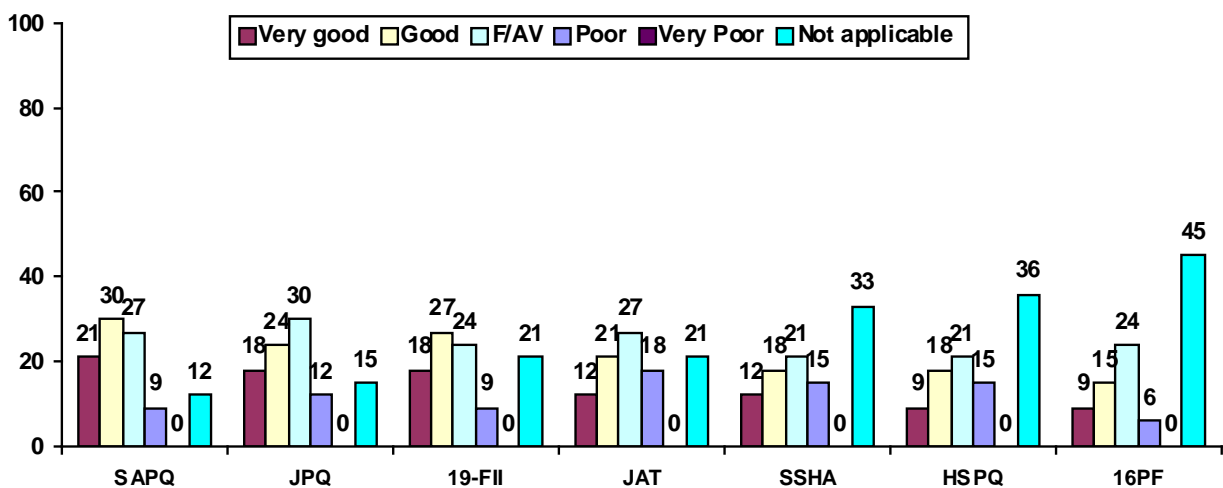


Figure 5.10 Rating of personality evaluation tools (a)

Figure 5.11 below shows Play Therapy being rated good at 36%, Reading and Spelling Test at 18%, Narrative Approach 24%, Check List 18% and In Complete Test at 12%. It is also important to note that while Play Therapy was rated good at 36%, it was also rated average at 21%. There is a small difference in ratings. Reading and Spelling Test, and In Complete Test were all rated at 36% average, Narrative Approach 33% and Check List at 21%.



Figure 5.11 Rating of evaluation tools (b)

Figure 5.12 shows the rating of tests by assessors in terms of their preferences. That a test is preferred by most assessors does not necessarily mean that it is good; it is just that they prefer it over others. In figure 12, SSAIS-R was preferred by most participants at 39%, followed by BENDER at (33%), GROVER (12%), IGSSA and JSAIS (15%) and HFD at (6%). It is also interesting to note that HFD was rated at (3%) less preferred half the rate at which it was rated preferred. BENDER and GROVER were rated less preferred at (12%) each, while SSAIS-R and IGSA were rated at 18% each less preferred and lastly JSAIS was rated less preferred at 21%.

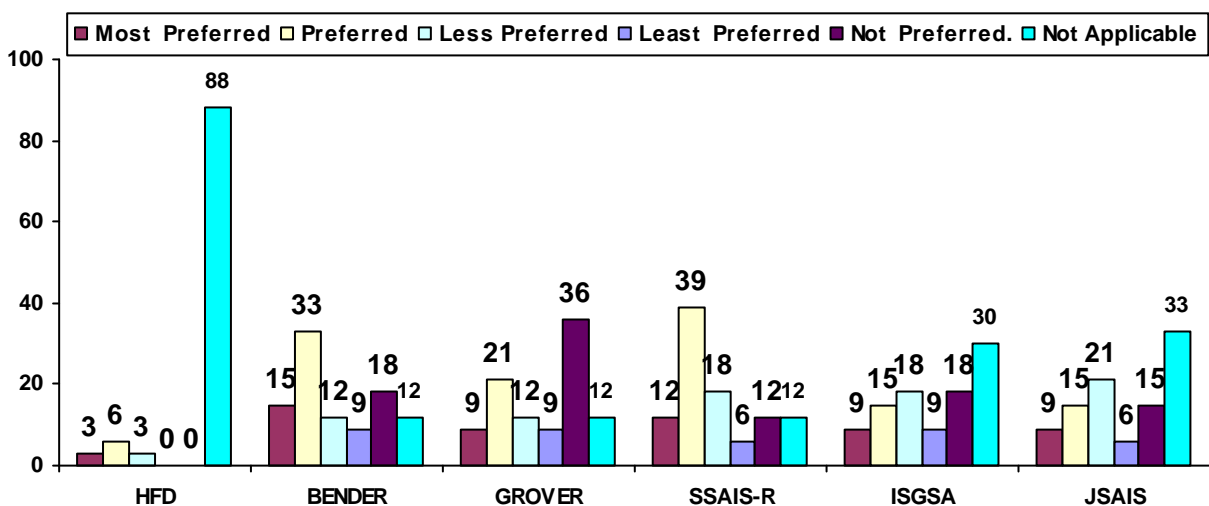


Figure 5.12 Rating of preference of tests

Figures 5.13 and 5.14 below show the rating of assessment tests that are used only by speech and audiologists. Figure 5.13 shows a high rating of up to 61% on not applicable. The reason is that these instruments were only used by speech therapists and audiologists which formed only 12% of the total research sample. The majority of the participants in the sample were not using these tests. Speech and audiologists rated HFD and AST good at 18%, IMMETANCE and FLUHARTY were rated at 15% each and TOLD was at 12%. On fair or average rating, HFD, IMMETANCE and FLUHARTY were rated at 12% each. AST was rated at 9% and TOLD at 15%. On fair or average rating, HFD, IMMETANCE and FLUHARTY were rated at 12% each. AST was rated at 9% and TOLD at 15%.

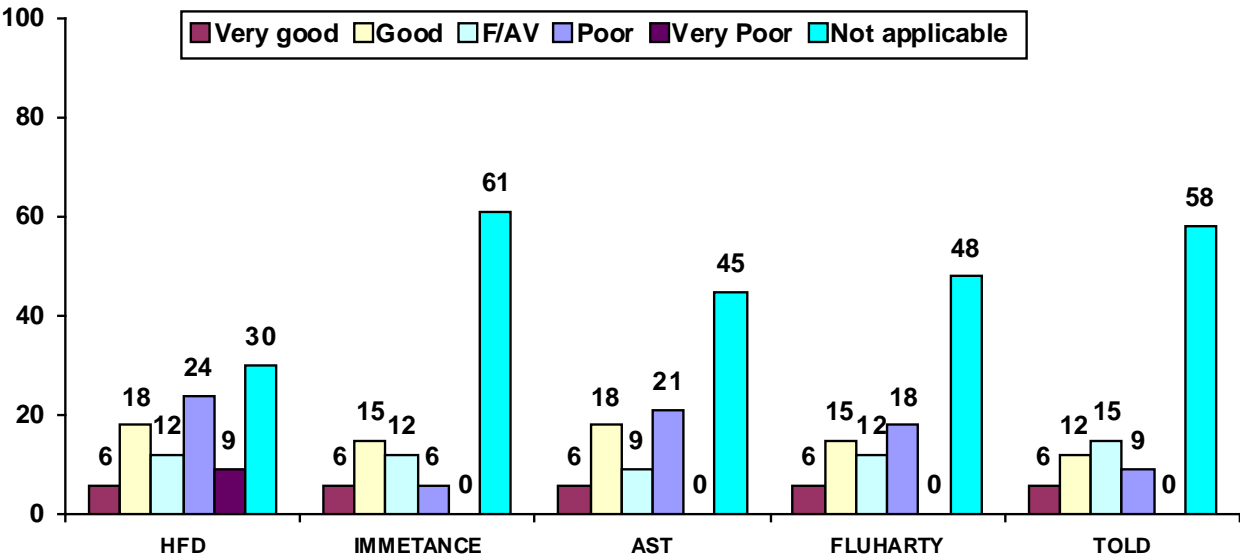


Figure 5.13 Rating of Speech and Audiology tests (a)

In Figure 5.14, Audiometer was rated good at 18% and 6% average. TACL-R and ARTICULATION were both rated good at 21% each. TACL-R was rated at 12% average and ARTICULATION at 18%. OTOSCOPE was rated at 12% both good and average and PENDULUM was at 15% good and 25% average. The rating of these instruments looks more or less the same at very good, good and fair or average. It looks like participants did not want to commit themselves on ratings or there could have been another reason which was not evident.

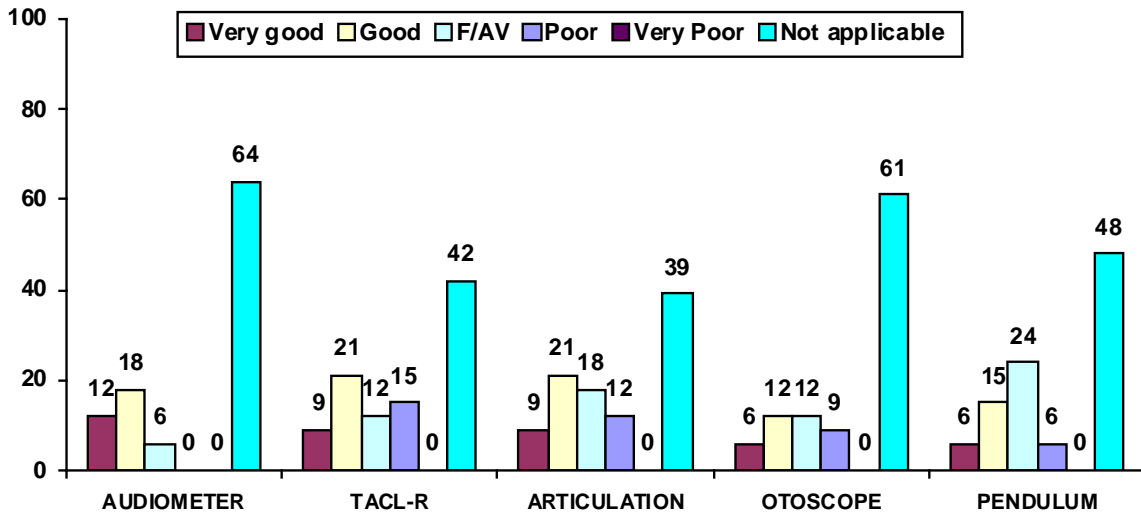


Figure 5.14 Rating of speech and audiology tests (b)

5.5 FILE ANALYSIS OF LEARNERS REFERRED FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION

Section 5.5 outlines the information retrieved from files of learners who were referred for psychological intervention at the Bethlehem child guidance clinic.

Table 5.1 Demographics of learner's referrals

Race	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Blacks	31	62
Whites	12	24
Coloureds	7	14
Total	50	100%

A total number of 50 files of learners who were referred to Child Guidance Clinic 5 for psychological intervention between 1993 and 2004 were audited. These files were randomly selected. The researcher chose the period spanning 1993 and 2004 because he wanted to look at the trend of assessment and evaluation during the apartheid era and after the birth of our democracy.

Out of 50 files, 31 were for black learners, 7 for coloured learners and 12 for white learners. That the file audit showed fewer white learners than blacks but more than coloureds does not suggest that white learners experienced fewer barriers to learning than blacks or more barriers than coloureds. Possible reasons could have been that the white learners referred had a good academic and social background over black learners and as a result were unlikely to be referred for psychological intervention. Another reason could have been that the school environment was so conducive to learning for white learners and that their problems were adequately attended to at school level. There could have been other reasons which are not highlighted in this study. Data from the files nevertheless provided valuable information about the way learners were assessed or evaluated. The data showed reasons for referral, race of a learner, age and grade, type of intervention, assessor's position and race, and recommendations.

According to Table 5.1 there were many black learners who were referred for psychological intervention in comparison with white and coloured learners. Reasons for referral in most of black learners' files were perceptual problems, poor academic performance, inadequate mental ability, emotional and behaviour problems, and placement in special education. The fact that there were more black learners than white and coloured learners who were referred for psychological intervention suggests that a majority of black learners were experiencing learning difficulties. This table shows that the ages of learners who were referred to Child Guidance Clinic 5 ranged from 5 to 15 years and that they were in grades R to 9. This is of significance to the study as it shows that most of them were between ages 6-15 and they were in Grades 1-3. A majority of them (36%) were in Grade 2.

Table 5.2 Age and grade of learners

Age	Grade	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
5	R	1	4
6-15	1	6	24
6-15	2	9	36
10-11	3	4	16
7-12	4	3	12
13	5	1	4
0	6	0	0
0	7	0	0
0	8	0	0
15	9	1	4
TOTAL		25	100

According to Table 5.2 more learners were referred for psychological intervention in Grades 1-5. In the last grades (3, 4 & 5) the numbers are decreasing. No learners were referred in Grades 6-8, with only one learner in Grade 9 which represents 4% of the sample. This might mean that as they progress with grades, they tend to be academically mature, so there was no need to refer them. There could be another reason(s) which was not evident in the study.

Table 5.3 shows that SSAIS-R was the most used individual intelligence test (58%) for assessing learners according to the files which were audited. It was followed by Bender Gestalt and Group test 6/8 at 26% each. Group test 5/6 and ASAT were both at 4%, JSAIR and Frogstic were the least used (2%). According to this analysis, assessors used SSAIS-R as an individual intelligence test which gives an IQ score to assess learners. This shows that many assessors still believe in IQ testing which is positivistic in nature.

Table 5.3 Assessment tests used

<u>Assessment tests administered</u>	<u>Frequency (n)</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
SSAIS-R	29	58%
JSAIR	01	02%
Group Test 5/6	02	04%
Group Test 6/8	13	26%
ASB	01	02%
ASAT	02	04%
Frostig	01	02%
Bender Gestalt	13	26%

Table 5.4 shows assessment techniques which were used to assess learners according to the file audit. Two assessment techniques were used, namely clinical interviews and clinical observation. In the 50 files that were audited, clinical interviews were used 6 times, which amounts to 12% and clinical observations were used 3 times, which totalled to 6%.

Table 5.4 Assessment techniques administered

<u>Assessment techniques administered</u>	<u>Frequency (n)</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
Clinical Observation	3	6%
Clinical interview	6	12%

Table 5.5 below shows information retrieved from 50 files of learners who were referred to Child Guidance Clinic for psychological intervention. This is a sample of the information found in all files of learners referred to all Free State child guidance clinics for psychological intervention.

Table 5.5 File audit of assessed learners

File No.	Age in years	Race of Learner	Race of assessor	Grade	Intervention	Reason for referral	Recommendations
1	10	Black	White	3	SSAIS-R	Special education	Special education
2	11	Black	White	4	SSAIS-R	Special Education & Poor academic performance	Special education
3	15	Black	Black	1	Clinical Observation & Interview	Special Education	Special education
4	10	Black	Black	1	SSAIS-R	Underachievement	Special education
5	15	White	White	9	Clinical Interview	Behaviour	Counselling
6	7	Black	Black	2	Group 7/8 & Bender Gestalt	Perceptual problems	Special education
7	5	Black	Black	R	Clinical Interviews	Sexual Abuse	Psychotherapy
8	6	Black	Black	1	Interview & Clinical Observation	School readiness	Special education
9	15	Black	Black	2	SSAIS-R	Underachievement	Medical intervention
10	7	White	White	4	Bender Gestalt & Group 7/8	Language development & Perceptual problems	Remedial education
11	7	White	White	1	Group 7/8 & Bender Gestalt	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
12	8	Black	White	3	Group 7/8 & Bender Gestalt	Perceptual problems	Remedial education & Paediatrician
13	9	White	White	2	Medical doctor, Draw a person & SSAIS-R	Underachievement	Psychotherapy
14	13	White	White	5	Interview & Clinical Observation	Perceptual problems	Special education & Counselling
15	11	Black	White	3	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
16	9	Black	Black	2	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
17	10	Black	White	3	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
18	10	Black	White	2	Bender Gestalt & SSAIS-R	Underachievement	Remedial education
19	10	Coloured	White	2	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
20	7	Black	White	2	Group Test 7/8	Perceptual problems	Special education

File No.	Age in years	Race of Learner	Race of assessor	Grade	Intervention	Reason for referral	Recommendations
					& Bender Gestalt		
21	8	Black	Black	1	Group Test 7/8 & Bender Gestalt	Perceptual problems	Special education
22	12	Black	White	4	SSAIS-R & Group Test 7/8	Poor academic achievement & perceptual problems	Special education
23	8	Black	Black	2	Group Test 7/8 & Bender Gestalt	Perceptual problems	Special education
24	7	Coloured	White	2	Group Test 7/8 & Bender Gestalt	Perceptual problems & poor academic performance	Special education
25	7	Black	Black	1	Group Test 5/6 & Bender Gestalt	Underachievement	Special education
26	10	Black	White	3	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Special education
27	7	Black	Black	1	Group Test 7/8	Perceptual problems	Remedial education and occupational therapy
28	8	Black	Black	1	Group Test 7/8	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
29	6	Coloured	Black	1	Group Test 5/6	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
30	10	Black	Black	1	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
31	9	Coloured	White	1	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
32	11	Coloured	White	1	SSAIS-R	Poor academic performance	Remedial education
33	11	Black	White	1	SSAIS-R	Poor academic performance	Remedial education
34	15	Black	Black	7	SSAIS-R	Poor academic performance	Remedial education
35	6	Black	Black	1	Group Test 5/6	Poor academic performance	Special education
36	10	Black	Black	4	SSAI-R	Poor academic performance	Special education
37	10	White	White	3	SSAIS-R and Clinical Observation and Clinical interview	Poor academic performance	Medical intervention

File No.	Age in years	Race of Learner	Race of assessor	Grade	Intervention	Reason for referral	Recommendations
38	11	White	White	3	SSAIS-R, Bender and Frostig	Perceptual problems	Medical intervention
39	12	White	White	5	SSAIS-R and ASAT	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
40	14	White	White	7	SSAIS-R ASAT	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
41	8	Coloured	White	3	SSAIS-R and Bender	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
42	9	Black	White	3	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
43	14	White	White	8	Bender and SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Remedial education
44	9	Black	Black	2	SSAIS	Poor academic performance	Special education
45	5	White	White	R	JSAIS	Speech and Poor language development	Remedial education
46	10	Black	Black	4	SSAIS-R	Perceptual problems	Special education
47	11	White	White	3	SSAIS-R and ASB	Underachievement	Psychotherapy
48	10	Black	White	3	SSAIS-R	Special education	Special education
49	8	Coloured	White	2	Group Test 7/8	Perceptual problems	Psychotherapy
50	8	Black	White	1	Group Test 7/8	Perceptual problems	Special education

According to Table 5.5, the ages of learners ranged from 5 to 15 years. There were more black learners evaluated than any other group. Of the learners who were evaluated, 62% were black, 24% were whites and 14% were coloured. The table shows that a black evaluator evaluated black learners 19 times and a white evaluator evaluated black and white learners 31 times. The reasons for referral were special education, perceptual problems, speech and language development, poor academic performance, school readiness, sexual abuse and underachievement. Perceptual problems were indicated 30 times (60%) as the reason for referral, special education 4 times (8%), speech and language development 2 times (4%), poor academic performance 10 times (20%), school readiness one time (2%), sexual abuse one time (2%), underachievement 5 times (10%) and behaviour one time (2%). Recommendations were special or remedial education, medical intervention, occupational therapy, psychotherapy and counselling.

Out of 50 files, special education was indicated 22 times (44%) as a recommendation, remedial 21 times (42%), medical intervention 4 times (8%), occupational therapy one time (2%), psychotherapy 4 times (8%) and counselling 2 times (4%). According to Table 5.5, many learners were recommended for enrolling in special and remedial education programmes.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The research findings aim at exploring the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation practices conducted at the Free State child guidance clinics. This study has indicated that white females dominated the assessment and evaluation process at the Free State child guidance clinics. All participants had relevant qualifications which make them competent to assess learners psychologically. What also transpired is that assessors and learners had different cultures and languages which posed a problem for assessment. File analysis shows that many learners were assessed by white assessors and the reasons for referral were mostly perceptual problems. It should be noted, however, that the sample was small and findings cannot be generalised to other settings.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 presents the data produced, analysed and interpreted through qualitative strategies in the second stage of the study. The strategies relate to the interpretation of findings in the context of the arguments and theory which inform this study. Discourse analysis procedures were used for analysing and interpreting data. In analysing and interpreting data, the researcher read every transcript of the interviews more than once. The researcher carefully reviewed the content issues as revealed in the interviews.

Twelve interviews were conducted with members of the Free State child guidance clinics. Other informal interviews were conducted with informants who were knowledgeable in the area of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. These were officials working in the Free State Department of Education and others in the private sector. An agreement was reached before the interviews were conducted that participants would be identified by being allocated a code "P" instead of their names. This was to ensure anonymity and to make participants feel free to give their views without any fear of being victimised or discriminated against because of what they might say. The researcher at this level of data production was interested at understanding the discourses generated and constructed by the participants. The free attitude interview (FAI) technique was used as a non-directive depth interview technique. The FAI is a qualitative interview technique which allows for the construction of knowledge through the participants' lens, and the research design hence becomes open and flexible.

The use of the FAI technique was essential for understanding the discourses generated. The FAI technique helped to broaden the space for the participants to intervene and for the researcher to be sensitive when seeking clarification of questions in the process. The real analysis was based on the TODA procedures formulated by Fairclough (1992), which is a technique of interrogating the conversations of the participants and is useful as it uses what the participants say as evidence. TODA implies listening to and reading the exact words (text) said by the participant.

That unearths the “truth” (Foucault, 1979), or ideological positioning, including deep meanings and understandings informing any construction of discourse. The argument is that words are a reflection of one’s inner feelings which in turn constitute a reflection of discursive practices within which an individual’s meaning construction is generated (Fairclough, 1992; Duncan, 1993 and Mahlomaholo, 1998).

The researcher listened to what the participants said about the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners; what their experiences were and how compatible the goals of psychological assessment were with the principles of inclusive education. The researcher visited all five Free State child guidance clinics, had some conversations about the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners and conducted interviews with the clinic staff. Before the interviews, a rapport was established with the participants by explaining the aim and purpose of the interviews. All interviewees were asked similar questions and their responses and feelings were compared to get the overall picture of what they said. Through the questions asked, themes were generated about the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners towards the realisation of the goals of inclusive education. Themes were then analysed and interpreted.

6.2 ANALYSIS

This section demonstrates data produced using interviews. It also includes the interpretations thereof.

6.2.1 Assessment tests used at clinics

The assessment tests used at clinics constituted one of the key themes that emerged from the textual analysis of the interviews. The question asked was which assessment tests and techniques you use to evaluate learners?

When answering the question, one participant said:

PI: “E... at the clinic there are quite a few tests that we use. Mm...for intellectual individual assessment, we use the SSAIS-R which is in different languages like; Xhosa, Tswana, English, Southern Sotho and Afrikaans... even though we use it for intellectual assessment, some prefer the IGSA because the SSAIS-R is not reliable; its norms do not cover all cultural groups”.

When assessing these learners, sometimes we encounter a problem of language as we are conversant with black African languages. Mmm! ...in fact we use the interpreter to help us with language to administer the IGSA to black Southern Sotho and Xhosa-speaking learners; we are allowed to do that... and for group testing, we sometimes use the Ravens; which is a Visual Motor Perception Test. This test is being used in a number of clinics although others do not like it as it does not give them any diagnostic feedback. We vary the use of tests because most of them are unfair and not valid for all cultural groups, for example one assessor conducted an assessment on a learner using the Ravens, the child' IQ was 80, so the child was referred for special education, later they then found that it was not true, a learner was re-assessed with a SSAIS-R, the IQ was now 109. Initially a learner was referred to special education which was then reversed and this learner was recommended to receive remedial education....it is suggested that before a recommendation is made, interview with the child or his/her educator, evaluation of his/her work is necessary, if still there is uncertainty then a psychological test like the IGSA can be used”.

Participants indicated that there were few psychological tests that they used to assess learners. Tests selection became a problem as the scope was narrow and tests used did not necessarily cover the age norms of some learners that they assessed. They also suggested that there was a need to develop culturally fair tests to suit the whole learner spectrum in the Free State. It is also clear that the tests norms are compromised when using an interpreter. What could have been said by a learner is not exactly what is said by an interpreter. That on its own jeopardises the assessment and evaluation process and surely affects the results. Assessors at the Free State child guidance clinics still use psychological group testing although it is no longer permitted and does not give them any diagnostic feedback. There is no agreement amongst clinics about which psychological tests to use. Clinics use different tests and that indicates a lack of uniformity amongst them on the use of psychological tests. Assessors are in agreement that most of the tests that they use are not valid for certain cultural groups like black learners. This results in learners' being misdiagnosed and sent to inappropriate scholastic programmes like special education.

One of the issues about psychological assessment (tests) was; what is the aim of using psychological assessment and how does it enhance teaching and learning. This is how one participant remarked:

P2: ...we do recognise that psychological tests must be used to enhance teaching and learning... but in the past, the aim of psychological assessment in schools was to place a

learner in an 'appropriate' educational programme like special or remedial education according to the results of tests used...if not so, the aim would be to assess a learner and allocate a clinic number so that the school can get a special or remedial education post... now we believe that there must be a paradigm shift on the aims of psychological assessment. The main purpose of psychological assessment in school, especially in an inclusive education context, should be to identify the weak points of a learner and draw up a plan of support. We understand that there has been a lot of criticism on the use of psychological tests in schools but our general feeling as psychologists is that psychological tests can still be used even in future but not to refer a child for special education... but for diagnostic purposes. One might use psychometric assessment as one of the methods of assessment but not making use of the IQ score to take a decision. Presently, there is something wrong [with] the way psychological assessment is conducted in this province. I am not suggesting that assessment tools need to be changed; rather we can settle for a specific battery of evaluations that will be common in all the clinics. Some people use assessment tools which are not relevant and out of context of the learners' cultural and language background. We need to use assessment tools that can accommodate all learners in a South African context. We must also acknowledge that assessment is conducted differently in different situations depending on the reason for referral. The reason could be scholastic, emotional or family-related. Different methods of assessment are used to assess learners.

On the same issue of the aim of using psychological assessment to enhance teaching and learning, one therapist remarked like this:

P3: *The reading and spelling tests can be used for diagnostic purposes. They are very good indicators of where the level of the child is and how to support him or her. In an inclusive education setting we recommend the use of spelling tests and the IGSA for diagnostic purposes. The IGSA gives an IQ score but the IQ score is not always important; it tells us how is the visual memory, reasoning and number concept of a child, then we can tell a teacher about the level of support that a learner needs or which perceptual modalities must be stimulated. We can then train a teacher on how to support a learner who experiences perceptual problems. Psychologists in private practice still use IQ testing and some schools continue to ask for the IQ score. A parent would refer his/her child to a private psychologist so as to know what is wrong with his/her child. This is seen as the medical approach to child assessment. What is required is to look at the learner's needs. As therapists we need not use tests every time we conduct psychological evaluation; sometimes alternative methods of*

evaluation like clinical observation and family background could be of help. The approach of helping a teacher to help learners is very good unlike helping an individual learner. There are thousands of learners who need our help as therapists and there are very few of us. People must realise that psychological evaluation is about helping a teacher to help a child; there must be a mind shift. The process that we follow once a learner has been evaluated is to give out a written report with [a] recommendation(s) to his/her school for the attention of the principal who would then disseminate the information to relevant people. Recommendations might be things like special or remedial education, intervention of an occupational therapist, medical practitioner, counselling or psychotherapy. Most unfortunately a number of teachers do not understand our reports. Clinics get a lot of referrals each month, so people just quickly write a report because of work overload. These reports sometimes just mean nothing to teachers because they carry little value.

From this conversation, therapists do understand that the aim of using psychological assessment must change from placement of learners in special settings into supporting them to realize their goals. In this interview, it became apparent that if it was not because of the introduction of EWP6 (2001), psychologists would have not changed the aims of assessment. The general feeling of psychologists is that psychological tests can still be used in the inclusive education setting to determine the weak points and strengths of a learner and thereafter draw a plan of action. Some therapists do agree that some tests that they use are culturally biased against black learners. They then suggest that similar test if possible must be used in all child guidance clinics so as to create uniformity.

6.2.2 The role of psychologists in an Inclusive Education setting

The following section is a summary of three interviews held with psychologists about their role in an inclusive education setting. It went like this:

P1: *We believe that as psychologists we do have the capability to work in the inclusive education system; it is just that we need relevant training. This does not mean that we (therapists) do not have a role to play in inclusive education, there is quite a lot. Our role as we see it is to support all learners who experience emotional and behavioural problems and to support teachers. It is imperative that we go to schools as a team and give guidance to teachers on how to help learners.*

Remedial specialists can help educators on how to help learners overcome their problems like to give didactic assistance. Special education advisors also have a role to play like to advise teachers on how to adapt the curriculum for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. We feel that [the] inclusive education system is a good system because it takes into cognisance the needs of all learners irrespective of colour, gender, race, ethnicity, disability or academic performance. However, we foresee some challenges in its implementation process unless they are attended to. There are three things:

- *Firstly, we think there is a misunderstanding of the interpretation of the implementation of White Paper 6 on inclusive education. Some groups see inclusive education as dumping all learners into one class. We see inclusive education differently; it means including everyone to have equal opportunity to education. Inclusive education says give support to all learners but we have not yet come to a point where we say how support will be given to schools. We have to clarify what we mean by inclusion.*
- *Secondly, training; at the moment teachers are not trained on inclusive education and advocacy is not yet done at school level.*
- *Thirdly, the interim phase; we are between two systems. We still have special classes, special schools, still using the old philosophy in the new system, we have not changed yet. We think we need some practical guide lines on how to transform special classes and convert special schools into resource centres. This is a process; we must do it step by step. We believe inclusive education is 100% good but there are two problems (a) too big classes and (b) teachers are not being given relevant support.*

P2: *We believe if all these things can be sorted out, this can work for our country. People need to understand the philosophy behind inclusive education and change the way they operate. This does not mean change for the sake of change; it means change because there is a need to change for good. In the education department, there are so many changes that have taken place. Some of these changes were not necessary, policy makers just came with policies which did not work for schools. There is a gap between policy and practice. Inclusive education is still a philosophy not yet being practiced. There were some good things that happened in the past. We think policy makers do not have any understanding of what happened in the past. The evaluation of Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners using the SATB for instance was good but now that was done away with. We think there is still a place for this test. Although group testing has been cancelled, we still make use of group tests not for placement but to identify learning barriers and map out a plan of action.*

6.2.3 Relevance of psychometric tests

Psychologist 2 is an expert in inclusive education and in learner support. This specialist is not directly involved in the psychological evaluation of learners, but has vast practical experience on psychological assessment and evaluation in the Free State department of education. She holds a PhD on learner support and development. When interviewed this is what she said:

P2: When assessing learners, it is very important to consider learners' background because it helps to give accurate results and indicate the learner's potential and needs. The education department must develop psychological tests that will be compatible with the learner's needs. Once culturally relevant assessment tests have been developed, then they should be used in such a way that they show the potential of a learner; not necessarily to use the IQ score if it is an individual intelligence test. Most of the tests are unfair, for example one child was assessed using the Ravens, and the child's IQ was 80, so the child was labelled a candidate for special education. The same child was re-assessed with a SSAIS-R and the IQ was now 109. The child's reading and spelling improved. It was unethical that the child was recommended for special education on the basis of the results of only the Ravens. It is recommended that an assessor must first talk to the child and his/her teacher, look at his/her work, it is then thereafter that one can use a psychological test. It is not always compulsory that one must use an IQ test when assessing. If it is really necessary that psychometric assessment must be administered, I would then prefer criterion referencing than norm referencing assessment.

This psychologist points out that tests must be culturally relevant to the needs of learners who are being assessed. It is not always necessary to use an IQ test. It would seem that according to this psychologist, tests that are used at the Free State child guidance clinics are not culturally relevant for learners who are assessed. This means new culturally relevant tests must be developed.

P3: Responded to the same question by saying: The relevance of psychometric testing will vary from population to population, [from] town to town and from district to district. I think scholastic evaluation can be done without using psychometric testing. IQ testing compares one learner to the other which is not good. One needs to assess a learner in totality. He/she must consider the social, developmental, academic and emotional aspects when assessing.

Some learners learn better through seeing or doing and we call them “visual or kinaesthetic” learners. Such learners should be considered when conducting psychological evaluation. We do not “refer” learners any more in an inclusive education setting. I hate to use the word “referral”; I do not think it should be in our vocabulary when we talk about learners in inclusive education. What we have to look at is which school will have the support that the learner needs. Not all schools are equipped with support resources, if a learners’ needs cannot be met at a particular school then that learner must be helped in a school which will be able to meet his/her needs. Those who experience severe barriers to learning and development must be placed in a resource centre where there is relevant support.

P3: *It is not a matter of placing him/her but a matter of meeting the learner’s needs and providing the necessary support in order to make progress in his/her performance. Basically that is how I think psychological testing should help a learner in an inclusive education setting.*

P4: *Another evaluation technique that can be used to assist learners is therapeutic intervention. I think this technique can be done in a narrative way just to understand a learner and thereafter draw up a support programme for that learner. Therapists must find activities on how to help learners. They should help learners in context. Having said all of this, I think we need to revise the policy on psychological assessment of learners in schools as a matter of urgency because that is where everything starts. We must use a variety of assessment procedures as an alternative to psychometric testing, depending on where is the barrier of a learner. Giving alternative forms of assessment is not an alternative but a must. We must use a holistic or what is called eco-systemic approach to assessment.*

P3 *In the eco-systemic approach you look at the child’s system in which he/she operates. His/her system may be his/her old friends, school or church. When assessing you do not just look at how a child performs at school but you also look at other factors that affect his/her performance. I think in general in the Free State we still have a lot to learn in terms of using alternative ways of psychological evaluation of learners.*

P4: *Once a learner has been assessed, a complete written report with (a) recommendation(s) is sent to school for the attention of the principal who will then inform the referring educator.*

The referring educator would communicate the results to the parent and the learner in a professional and humane manner. Sometimes the same report is sent to a medical practitioner, speech or occupational therapist, social worker or any other health professional when it is necessary. Recommendations would be something like: a learner qualifies for remedial or special education, medical intervention, speech or language development and counselling or psychotherapy. Sometimes other recommendations are not practically implementable. The next step would be to give support to a learner according to his/her needs.

It then became evident from the above conversations that tests used at the child guidance clinics are not culturally relevant for most learners who are assessed. New culturally relevant tests must be established. Psychologists can still play a role in an Inclusive Education setting but they must change the aims of psychological assessment from placement of learners in special settings into identifying learners' weak points and strengths. Thereafter a plan of action to support a learner must be drawn. From the above conversations, there is agreement that the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation are not compatible with the goals of Inclusive Education. All therapists agree that tests used are not addressing the needs of learners who are being assessed and that most of their recommendations are not implemented because schools sometimes do not understand their reports.

6.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

When Engelbrecht *et al.* (1999, p100) explain what assessment is all about, they say: "Assessment is not just about testing, but tests may form a valuable addition to the process of assessment. It is clear that all assessments have elements of measurement and evaluation but what is now emphasised is the positive aspect, namely the essential linking of a diagnostic aspect with classroom curricula and the growth and development of learners." It is impossible for this study to address every aspect of assessment; its focus is on psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context. Educational assessment is used here as a springboard for psychological assessment. Psychological assessment is seen as a process-orientated activity whereby a wide array of psychological information is collected using psychological assessment measures like psychological tests. Additional information is collected through other sources such as clinical interviews, the person's history, behavioural observation and also through collateral sources.

The information is then evaluated, integrated and conclusions or decisions are made (Foxcroft & Roodt 2001, p 4; Cohen, Swerdlik & Smith 1992, p11). Literature review gave me as researcher a bigger lens through which I could critically look at psychological assessment and evaluation as key concepts in this study. It served as a frame of reference when data were produced, processed and interpreted. A variety of primary sources were consulted when doing the literature review. Information from primary sources was used together with secondary sources. The literature review in this study helped to form a theoretical base from which assumptions could be made. It suggests that there is a strong need to review the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting.

The review revealed that there are very few sources specifically addressing the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting, hence the importance of this study. This could be because inclusive education is still in its infancy, especially in South Africa, although psychological assessment and evaluation are concepts which have been entertained for quite some decades. The literature on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners is more from a Western perspective than an African perspective. This also indicates that psychological assessment tools and techniques are more influenced by theories which have a Western origin. Such assessment tools and techniques are then used to evaluate learners in African societies. This in itself is cultural bias. There is a close correlation between what the existing literature review revealed about psychological assessment and evaluation of learners and the results of the empirical study.

6.4 DIFFERENT THEMES EMERGING FROM DATA

6.4.1 Age

As it has been noted above, 27% of the participants were between the ages of 35 and 39 and that shows they still have several years for practicing the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners before their retirement age. It is inferred that this age group has been schooled in the humanistic approach of psychological evaluation. The fact that they were schooled in the humanistic approach of psychological assessment implies that they can positively influence the way in which psychological evaluation is conducted in schools. The empirical study, on the other hand, indicated that about 60% of psychologists still believe that there is a role for psychological assessment in an inclusive education system.

This is an indication that although the 35-39 age group is assumed to have been schooled in the humanistic approach, in practice they use the psychometric approach in psychological assessment. The fact that only 3% of the 55-59 age group were represented in the research sample is a matter of concern as they have a vast experience of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. It is also inferred that this group (55-59 age group) was schooled in the psychometric approach of psychological assessment which had been heavily criticised because of its discriminatory and derogative features. Another warring factor is that there were no participants for the 25-29 age category. This might be an indication that the young generation is not interested in the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners or in working in the education department as therapists. This needs further research. It then becomes a challenge in the education department to recruit more therapists, especially black therapists. That the majority of participants were below the age of 50 could have influenced the way they responded to the research questions.

6.4.2 Gender

As noted in Chapter 5, males dominated the 30-39 age group by 36% over females. This could have been the results of the apartheid education where males were in one way or another advantaged over females. It could also have been that the females who had relevant qualifications to work at the clinics had decided to work in other sectors. In the empirical study it was not clear why males dominated over females in this age group. Females dominated the 45-49 age group by 23% over males. The last age group 55-59, consisted of white females only. However, they formed 5% of the total research population and there were no males and no black participants in this category.

According to the empirical study female participants dominated the overall research sample by 67% over males who were at 33%. This could have influenced the responses of the participants. Reasons for this could be that more females have been trained in psychology, or fewer men opted for working at the child guidance clinics. Another reason could be that more females are comfortable with working with learners who experience barriers to learning. If this is the case, a lot of work needs to be done to show that it is not only the responsibility of females to take care of learners who experience barriers to learning. There could be other reasons; further research on this needs to be conducted.

6.4.3 Race

Whites in South Africa are a dominant culture group and have the vocabulary of psychological assessment (Sibaya *et al.*, 1996, p.107; Claassen & Scheepers 1990). Even though professionally trained black psychologists have at long last joined professional ranks, they too are trained along the lines of models relevant to the dominant group. In the changing democratic South Africa, norm-reference assessment is gaining popularity. Shuttleworth-Jordan (1995; 1996) draw our attention to the current broader model of psychological testing in which a more holistic approach is becoming the focal point, and in which it is assumed that test results form only part of the total testing process. It is being realised that a final score is only the final product of number of complex cognitive and non-cognitive processes (Retief, 1998). It becomes evident that decisions about an individual can be enhanced through the use of methods which provide information on multiple traits, and multiple assessment methods that draw information from multiple sources. It is against this background that I advocate for an eco-systemic approach to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners which is relevant in an inclusive education setting.

The empirical study shows that 58% of the participants were whites and 42% were blacks. There were no Asians or coloureds. The implication of this is that the majority of assessors are whites, who do not share the culture of the majority of learners, who are black. This correlates with the data produced through interviews and the file analysis data that showed that many black learners were evaluated by whites. This has an influence on how learners are psychologically evaluated. This study indicates that there is a problem about who assesses whom with what and how. Whites dominated the 40-54 age group and there were no blacks in this category. It is cause for concern that in this age group there were no blacks. Blacks only dominated over whites in the 30-39 age group; however, they formed a very small percentage of the total research population.

6.4.4 Qualifications of assessors

All the clinic personnel at the child guidance clinics had the relevant qualifications for conducting psychological assessment. Figure 5.1 (see 5.4.2) shows that 10 of the participants had a Master's in psychology, 8 had a B.Soc., 7 had a Master's in education and BA Hons. (Psychology) and 27 had BA degrees. Their qualifications made them competent to assist learners who experience barriers to learning and development. The fact that they had relevant qualifications shows that they are the relevant people to conduct psychological assessment and evaluation of learners.

Remedial specialists and psychologists formed 24% of the research participants. Special education specialists consisted of 18%, socio-pedagogues 21% and only 12% were speech therapists and audiologists. Speech therapists, audiologists and socio-pedagogues were the smallest number in the sample because they are very few in all the clinics. This does not mean that their work is less important than that of the others; it is just that only the Free State Department of Education employed a few. The fact that remedial specialists and psychologists are in the majority of the research sample indicate that they dominated the assessment and evaluation of learners in the clinics. Amongst the participants who had a Master's in psychology were the psychologists, while the remedial specialists had Honours degrees in psychology.

6.4.5 Reasons for working at the clinic

According to figure 5.7, participants decided to work at the clinics because they wanted to help educators and parents to help learners who experienced barriers to learning and development. They loved to work with young children in need and to apply the skills they had. What also motivated them to work at the clinics were their relevant qualifications which gave them the confidence to apply their skills. What was surprising about the rating on reasons to work at the clinics was that they rated the reason "helping educators to help learners" far higher than that they had relevant qualifications. The reasons could have been that they were trying to be politically correct or they were more concerned about their work than their qualifications. The clinic personnel seemed passionate about the work they did at the clinics.

6.4.6 Cultural and language influence on psychological assessment and evaluation

In South Africa, one finds a situation where an English- or Afrikaans-speaking therapist administers an assessment procedure in English to a black learner whose home language is not English and who is not competent in it. The provision of psychological evaluation services by therapists who are not competent and do not understand the cultural background of black learners is considered unethical. It also becomes unethical to deny such learners educational opportunities because of assessment results which indicate that they have performed badly in tests so they must be placed in special settings (Korman, 1973. p. 18). According to figures 5.3 and 5.4, there are more whites than black assessors in the Free State child guidance clinics. This means that white therapists assess most learners. Figure 5.4 shows that 58% of the participants speak Afrikaans as their first language and 88% speak English as their second language.

In my personal background to the study, I have indicated that about 70% of learners that the child guidance clinics were expected to serve were black. The study shows that there is a serious shortage of black assessors in the Free State Department of Education. This raises some questions about the validity and fairness of the assessment results produced in conditions like these with black learners. Some learners are competent in English but come from a variety of social, cultural and home language backgrounds. Each of these learners brings along a certain degree of his/her English language acquisition and admixtures of African acculturations to the test dialogue process (Schoeman & Gilmer, 1992). Maree (2003, p.90) says, "Although comprehensive literature exists on the topic of test bias, there is limited scientific literature on standardised psychological tests or instruments used with majority groups, especially with black people in South Africa." This poses a challenge to psychology as a profession in South Africa as to how far has it aligned itself with "transformation". In the new, democratic South Africa, psychological assessment can no longer be used to classify people or group learners according to their mental ability. The South African law requires psychologists to be proactively involved by requiring evidence that tests used are fair and unbiased (Van der Vijver & Rothmann, 2004, p.1).

Presently, a number of problems exist in the psycho-educational assessment of learners in schools in South Africa. A number of reasons exist for such a situation. Firstly, South Africa is a multicultural country which is trying to shed the injustices of the apartheid regime. It then becomes imperative that psychological evaluation should address the imbalances of the past. Secondly, during the apartheid era psychological assessment and evaluation was used as a vehicle to enforce discriminatory policies. It would be used in schools to prove that black learners had an inferior mental ability as opposed to other racial groups. This had an impact on the way the curriculum was structured for black learners and the distribution of educational resources.

Thirdly, there is a shortage of culturally fair tests to be used with learners. Psychological assessment (psychological tests) is seen by many people as biased and unfair to persons from historically disadvantaged communities. Since most of them reflect largely white, middle-class values and attitudes, and they do not reflect the experience, linguistic, cognitive, and other cultural styles and values of black communities (Jones, 1988, p. 15; Resnick & Resnick, 1982, p.86; Owen, 1998, p.55-57). The majority of these psychological tests and evaluation techniques currently in use in South Africa were developed for the "minority group" (for which read: "white group"). On the other hand, professionals in this country do not consistently take into account the meaning of cultural relevancy as an aspect of the theoretical underpinnings of tests they use, or else they fail to take into account the obvious shortcomings of the tests that they use when working cross-culturally (Maree, 2003, p. 84-85).

This is the situation in the Free State child guidance clinics. A majority of assessors when administering psychological tests are forced to translate instructions to the language of a learner through the assistance of an interpreter. When one psychologist was interviewed about the tests that they use, she said;

P4: "Some of us prefer to use the IGSA because the SSAIS-R sometimes does not work at all for us and for learners since its norms are not reliable. For group test, we sometimes use the Ravens; it is a Visual Motor Perception Test. This test is used in a number of clinics but some of us as therapists do not prefer it as it does not give us any diagnostic feedback. For the IGSA, we use the interpreter; we are allowed to do that. Sometimes we go to schools and talk to learners and educators; we do not always use tests."

A test becomes invalid if transformed from one form to another and interpretation of test results then become unfair (Johnson & Christensen, 2000; Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001). The other problem is to understand the learners' responses in the context of their culture. For an example, in the SSAIS-R there is an item which requires a learner to find a similarity between beer and wine. One learner might say that they use beer when performing a particular African traditional ritual like when talking to the ancestors and wine is used in the celebration of a Western wedding or a party. This answer according to SSAIS-R is incorrect but according to a learner's cultural background it is correct. Such items in tests like these do not assess mental ability in context of the cultural background of a learner as it is suggested in Sternberg's Contextual intelligence theory. The SSAIS-R English version requires a learner to have a certain proficiency in English.

It is imperative that whatever form of assessment is used, it should not be biased either racially or culturally. IQ tests cannot be used to assess learners for placement in special education programmes or any other programme. It is unfortunate that up to this stage little progress has been made in developing unbiased assessment procedures. If psychological tests must be used, they must meet the required criteria. Such tests must be provided and administered in the child's native language. Tests must be used for the purpose for which they are validated. Such tests must be used only for educational purposes to maximise learners' potentials (Jones, 1988, p.13-14). This study sees culture as one of the influential factors that play a vital role in the psychological evaluation of learners as it is shown in the interviews and file analysis of this study. The empirical research shows that all the psychologists who participated in the interviews were white and the file analysis indicates that white psychologists assessed 32% of the black learners.

This clearly shows that culture had a big influence on evaluation. White therapists find it difficult to work with black learners, especially those who come from academically disadvantaged communities as they share different cultural and language backgrounds. This is because the therapists lack exposure to traditional African culture and language. It then becomes problematic for the therapists to establish a workable rapport and carry out a genuine psychological evaluation. Most participants said that they used only a few psychological tools and that they were unfortunately not all culturally fair and language-fair, especially to black learners. When commenting about the use of culturally fair tests, one therapist said;

T 1: “We vary the use of tests because most of them are unfair and are not valid for all cultural groups... The education department must develop psychological tests that will be compatible with the learner’s needs. Once culturally relevant assessment tests have been developed, then they should be used in such a way that they show the potential of a learner...”

It is then argued that whenever psychological tools or techniques are used to evaluate learners who come from a diverse multicultural background, culturally fair techniques and tools must be used. Their social and cultural background must be taken into account. This means that assessors should have the cultural and language background of those being assessed. It is important that learners be assessed in their own languages or a language in which they have good proficiency, as it plays a vital role in performance during assessment. This is especially important when a learner is assessed through a language other than his or her first language. In developing inclusive institutions, deferent dimensions of inclusion, like cultures, policies and practices must be taken into account. Stabb & Harris 1995 when commenting about the cultural and language issues in terms of psychological assessment, say “professionals administering tests should have a sound knowledge of cultural factors that can influence test behaviour” (e.g. the cultural ecological history, the theory of socio-cultural behaviour in cultural contexts and an examinee’s degree of acculturation).

The Free State Department of Education is facing a serious problem where a number of therapist or assessors are white and do not share the cultural background of the black learners they assess. The file audit shows that 62% of learners who were assessed were black and spoke Southern Sotho as their first language. The dominant languages in the Free State in their chronological order are Southern Sotho, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, isiXhosa and English. It stands to reason that the language factor influences the way psychological assessment and evaluation is conducted with learners in the Free State child guidance clinics.

In such a scenario there is no doubt that assessment error influences the validity of results. For reliability and validity of results, it is recommended that assessors who are strongly conversant with their language and culture evaluate learners.

In cases where examinees (learners) show a low level of education, it is imperative that psychological tests be administered in the language in which the examinee is proficient, if not in the mother tongue (Sibaya *et al.*, 1996). Some psychologists as participants of the study indicated that the fact that they did not share the language and culture of learners they assessed, frustrated them, this underscores the importance of their work. Added to this problem is the shortage of “culturally fair tests and techniques” and the dearth of therapists against a big number of learners and educators who need their attention. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p.330) when discussing the implications of culturally biased measures, remark: “...without measures with culturally relevant content and appropriate norms, fair testing practices may be compromised. ...people may be denied educational and occupational opportunities because of a test score that is not a valid indicator of their ability”. It is important that when assessment is conducted, a cultural influence must always be considered.

Culture plays a negative influence on the assessment and evaluation conducted at the Free State child guidance clinics. The situation needs to improve in order to truly address learners’ barriers to learning and development. The Free State Department of Education must employ more black therapists who understand black learners’ culture. It is important that learners be assessed through their languages or where they have good proficiency. The problem of culture and language is an issue which needs urgent attention, as it has been noted above. According to figure 5.4 most of the assessors are either English or Afrikaans speaking and most of the time they find themselves assessing Southern Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa or Tswana learners. This is because there is a shortage of black therapists working at the clinics who understand the culture and language of black learners. Their assessment is therefore biased and lacks validity as they do not share the same cultural background with learners. When psychologists were asked about the influence of culture and language on psychological evaluation of learners, they said;

P5: “Some people use assessment tools which are not relevant and out of context of learners’ cultural and language background. We need to use assessment tools that can accommodate all learners in a South African context. It is very important to consider learners’ background because it helps to give accurate results and indicate the learner’s potential and needs.”

6.4.7 Relevance of psychological tests and techniques

The relevancy of psychological assessment and evaluation in addressing the educational and social needs of learners has always been in the spotlight. This calls for a paradigm shift in psychological assessment and evaluation practices in education. Pahad (1996, p. 1) says, “a dramatic paradigm shift is needed in assessment practices across education and training in South Africa, as a logical and essential part of the transformation envisaged in new policies in education.... The critical characteristic of the required shift is the move from a judgemental to a developmental role for assessment.” It is imperative that when psychological assessment and evaluation of learners is conducted, information must be collected from various sources to make accurate and informed decisions. For instance, to diagnose a learner with ADHD one needs to get information from teachers, parents, psychological tests measuring the disorder and from a psychologist (Johnson & Christensen 2000:99).

Having collected information from various sources, it is still possible that an error of measurement has occurred. This is called “assessment error”. Johnson & Christensen (2000) add: “*Error in the assessment process refers to the fact that the scores obtained in any assessment are influenced by variables other than the trait or characteristic being assessed.*” For example, if you are trying to assess students’ intelligence by giving them an intelligence test, the IQ score obtained on the test would be a result of these persons’ actual intellectual level plus a variety of other factors, such as how tired they were when they took the test, whether they were physically sick or experiencing some interpersonal difficulty. Such variables determine the score obtained from the assessment and introduce “error” into assessment.

The greater the amount of error, the more inaccurate psychological assessment is. Indeed, the South African education system needs a psychological evaluation support system which is developmental and takes care of the needs of learners. Any assessment including psychological assessment should point at the weaknesses and the strengths of learners and suggest a developmental plan of action. Assessors, including therapists, should move away from a judgmental, deficit assessment approach to a learner-centred approach. The latter approach compels therapists to change their scope of operation and become consultants and collaborators. Relevancy of psychometric testing and evaluation techniques varies from population to population, from town to town and from district to district. Psychological tests and evaluation techniques used in South Africa were imported from abroad around the 1900s and were used in all the communities.

Such tests were biased against the South African community, especially the black community. They are unable to capture properly the specificity of psychological competencies of learners in South Africa from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds because they are mainly based on children from dominant groups of Western societies. This consequently generates assessment errors and inaccuracies in diagnoses (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002). Psychological testing in South Africa was originally developed to be used with the Afrikaans- and English-speaking population and excluded the African group which comprised the largest population (Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2004, p.2). Historically disadvantaged learners in South Africa had been discriminated against as far as the use of psychological assessment is concerned. These learners were unfamiliar with the material used in psychological tests and counselling techniques. In the standardisation process, not all population groups were represented as one would expect in a multicultural country like South Africa (Abrahams & Mauer, 1999, p. 76). The relevance of psychological assessment and evaluation techniques is strongly influenced by psychosocial factors of localities.

Based on the above statement, none of the tests used in the Free State child guidance clinics were standardised in the Free State province. It then becomes clear that they are not valid for the Free State learner population. Moreover, there are quite a few tests that are available for use in the clinics. In such a scenario, assessment error becomes a major factor and creates bias and unfairness. This shows that there is no compatibility between the reason for referral and the selection and use of assessment tests or evaluation techniques. Some of the individual assessment tests used for learner assessment at the Free State child guidance clinics are the SSAIS-R and the IGSA. Versions used for the SSAIS-R are isiXhosa, seTswana, IsiZulu, English, Southern Sotho and Afrikaans. Some therapists especially the psychologists prefer to use the IGSA because they believe that the norms for the SSAIS-R are not reliable, especially for learners whose first language is either isiXhosa, seTswana, Southern Sotho or IsiZulu.

Therapists who do not share the cultural and language background of the assessed (a learner), make use of an interpreter for communication purposes when using the IGSA. Some assessors prefer to use the Ravens for group testing although EWP6 outlaws its use in schools. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p.27) concur with the above statements: "School readiness testing, as well as the routine administration of group tests in schools, was banned in many provinces as such testing was seen as being exclusionary and perpetuating the discriminatory policies of the past."

It looks like therapists in the education department do not assess learners according to policies legislated in South Africa but assess learners according to their preferences of tests and techniques. This study shows that the Ravens as a Visual Motor Perception Test is used in most of the child guidance clinics in the Free State although some therapists do not prefer it as it does not give them any diagnostic feedback. Those who prefer to use the Ravens as a group test perhaps do so because it makes their work easy and more manageable or perhaps they just like it. Data produced in this study through the use of questionnaires, and interviews showed that there are very few standardised psychological tests used for learners speaking Southern Sotho, IsiZulu and IsiXhosa. This data shows that there were problems with the evaluation tools that were used for black learners in the Free State child guidance clinics. Tools used for evaluation of learners showed cultural and language bias. A majority of black learners in the Free State were psychologically marginalised using culturally and language-biased psychological tools. New culturally fair and bias-free South African tests must be developed.

Bedell, van Eeden and van Staden (n.d.,p. 5) say: “There is a clear awareness among those working in the field of psychometric testing of a need for change in order to make those tests that are available, as well as those to be developed in future, relevant for a multicultural society like South Africa.” From the above statements it is clear that assessors do not agree on the commonalities of the use of assessment tests and evaluation techniques. This shows that there is a big possibility that the selection and preference of assessment tests and techniques is not according to learners’ needs but according to an assessor’s convenience. Taking this background into consideration, it becomes apparent that the psychological tests and techniques used in the Free State child guidance clinics are not relevant and do not meet learners’ needs. It then stands to reason that psychological tests and techniques which are compatible with learners’ needs must be developed. Once culturally relevant assessment tests and techniques have been developed, then they should be used in such a way that they show the potential of a learner, and not necessarily the IQ score if it is an individual intelligence test.

6.5 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF LEARNERS IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education system focuses on the strengths and potentials of learners rather than diagnosing them as having problems. Sattler (1988, p. 592) says, “Tests should be used if the potential exists for them to contribute to the development of the child. ...they should never be used when they would physically or emotionally harm any child”.

This means that nothing must be done before, during and after testing if it will harm the child. This would be in cases where there is concrete evidence for a need of psychometric assessment; stated differently, it will add no value to the development of a learner. According to DoE (2001) the present psychological assessment does not meet the needs of all learners. This calls for the transformation of the psychological evaluation system from the medical-individualistic model to the eco-systemic constructive model if it seeks to work on the strengths and potential of learners. The understanding behind inclusive education system is that a learner experiences (a) problem(s) while the medical model views a learner as having a problem.

Inclusive education system advocates for an assessment approach which is developmental and cares for learner's needs. A developmental and progressive assessment approach is the one that looks at the strengths and potentials of learners. The practice of psychological assessment and evaluation in our schools needs to be radically and developmentally transformed. This should not be done for the sake of transformation but for the benefit of learners especially those who experience barriers to learning and development. The inclusive education system compels therapists to re-consider the way they assess learners. This means that they must change their individualistic Eurocentric approach to the developmental eco-systemic approach. Psychological evaluation results, which do not indicate how a learner's potential can be maximised, are invalid, useless and a waste of time and resources. Psychological evaluation in an inclusive education setting should aim at identifying learning barriers and suggests corrective measures to create conducive teaching and learning environment.

It is important that learners must clearly understand why they are psychologically evaluated. They should also be briefed on how they are going to benefit from such an evaluation. Results should be communicated back to learners in a professional and ethical manner. It is advisable that learner's language of communication should be used when communicating results. Psychological evaluation should encourage the "yes I can" attitude and promote self-understanding to learners. Assessment of learners in an inclusive education setting must be conducted in an effective and accurate manner. Poor psychological assessment strategies will mean that the underlying principles of inclusive education are undermined. In embracing psychological assessment in an inclusive education system, one needs to understand why must it be conducted with learners? In trying to understand and answer this question, follow-up questions like these were asked:

- What is meant by psychological assessment?
- Why assessing?
- Who assesses?

- What are the aims of psychological assessment?
- Who benefits from such an assessment?
- Which tools are used to assess and why?

Answers to these questions should show that learners would benefit and develop through psychological assessment and evaluation. These questions should also translate into good teaching and learning.

6.6 THE CHANGING ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTING.

Educational changes and schools problems compel therapists like psychologists in education to change their traditional role of individualistic and diagnostic intervention into mentoring, consultation, monitoring and programme development. Psychologists have the responsibility to take care and use psychological and behavioural assessment, including clinical observations, counselling techniques, clinical interviews, psychological tests and other relevant instruments appropriately and in an ethical manner. Psychologists should ensure that learners do not perceive the testing process and its outcome as being punishment and disempowering because of unfair or unethical testing practices. It is their responsibility to ensure that they follow ethical practices that result in learners perceiving psychological evaluation to be fair and constructive. These ethical testing practices will be attained by psychologists who have the necessary competencies and a sound knowledge of psychometrics and testing; an understanding of the broader social, cultural, political, and legal context in which testing is used and the manner in which such factors might affect test results, their interpretation, and the use thereof (ITC, 2001).

Psychologists also have a responsibility to ensure cultural and linguistic competence in the provision of psychological services. When an individual's assessment is not practical, psychologists shall document the efforts made, and shall clarify the probable impact of their limited information on the reliability and validity of their opinions and appropriately limit the nature and extent of their findings. They shall refrain from the misuse of assessment techniques, interventions, results, and interpretations and take reasonable steps to prevent others from misusing the information these methods provide. This includes refraining from releasing raw test results or raw data to persons, other than to clients as appropriate, who are not qualified to use such information.

They shall also accompany communication of results of assessment procedures to the client, parents, legal guardians, or other legally authorised person on behalf of the client with adequate interpretative aids or explanations, if necessary (PHPCSA, 2002, p. 9-11). In the process of psychological assessment, we then make use of the information gathered through assessment to make decisions. This is what is called psychological evaluation. They will have to be trained and their qualifications upgraded in order to fit well in the new inclusive education system (DoE, 2004).

Schools are faced with learners' problems which range from a rising teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, poor learner academic performance, school violence and educators who are under tremendous stress because of educational changes. This then forces them to work directly with schools. These demands come at a time when there is a great shortage of therapists especially black therapists in the education department more specifically in the Free State province. The ratio of trained psycho-educationalists to the number of school children in South Africa reflects the fact that practice expediency is often the order of the day in local psycho-educational practice (Donald, 1991). This is also evidenced in the data produced in this study about the ratio of therapists and learners in the Free State. There are not more than (30) therapists employed by the Free State department of education who practice psychological evaluation against more than a thousand schools. There is also a serious shortage of appropriate psychological assessment tools for use in the culturally diverse South African society in an educational context. The situation becomes so serious if we look at the historically disadvantaged black learners.

Assessment tools are available for white South African learners but for other racial groups, there is a big shortage (Foxcroft, 1991). It was only in 1980 that "black" psychologist began to graduate from South African universities (Louw & Foster, 1991). Shortage of black psychologists in the education department is a matter of urgency if we need to see black learners benefiting from psychological assessment and evaluation. This shortage is evidenced in the data produced in the empirical study. It is not pleasing to note that some of the experienced therapists are about to retire because of their age. Adding oil to fire, the number of students in universities persuading psychology so as to be registered psychologists is far lower than the demands in the world of work. Such a demand calls for the education department to recruit more psychologists and other therapists; and provide more incentives. The role of psychologists and other therapists in an inclusive education setting is undoubtedly indispensable. In view of the above statements, it shows that we need more therapists than before especially black psychologists. This is the right time for the therapists to show the importance of their profession in education by being collaborators, consultants and give support to learners and empower educators as it is indicated by Engelbrecht (2004).

All therapists have a role to play in the transformation of education system from special education to inclusive education. According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001, p.17) “There is widespread acceptance of the role that education support professionals (such as educational psychologists, school counsellors, therapists, special educators and learning support specialists) can play in meeting learners’ needs, and reducing their exclusion from school curricula and communities”. According to white paper 6 on special needs education (2001), therapists including psychologists will have to assume new roles of functioning as members of the DBST and become consultants in schools to empower teachers and work collaboratively with other specialists in teams. Thinking that this is a challenge to most of the therapists, they will have to adjust to the new setting and think about the new ways of supporting schools in general. Engelbrecht (2004, p.23) when explaining the new role of educational psychologists says:

...we need to acknowledge the fact that appropriate educational psychological support within inclusive education demands the development of a culture which embodies ecosystemic and inclusive values within a holistic approach to support. This means that the specialised insight, skills and practice of educational psychologists should be directed at providing holistic health-promotive, developmental and preventative actions in relation to individuals, schools and communities. ...educational psychologists must not only be prepared to intervene on an individual level, but also on a systems level in order to implement and evaluate preventative programmes.

In these efforts they should conduct ecologically and systemically valid assessments and interventions to promote positive learning environments within which learners and educators from diverse backgrounds have equal access to effective educational psychological support. New roles include those of organisational facilitators and collaborators in school reform and change and intersectoral collaboration, consultants who assist schools to establish mechanisms for including and supporting learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development and mental health specialists who help educators and school administrators to foster competent (i.e. mentally health) learners. Their role in an inclusive education setting is to work as consultants and collaborators with other health professionals and teachers in trying to support all learners who experience barriers to learning and development including those who experience emotional and behavioural problems.

One therapist said;

T2: It is imperative that sometimes we go to schools as a team and give guidance to educators on how to help learners who experience barriers to learning. We will also have to collaborate with other specialists from other departments.

In order for therapists to help educators efficiently, they will have to be capacitated on the principles of inclusive education and their new role as consultants and collaborators. Learners must be helped in context like it has been indicated above. Engelbrecht (2004, p.1) concurs with the above statement when saying:

“The challenges related to the changing nature of education in South Africa and the relationship of these challenges to the past, and particularly to the problems of apartheid, have forced educational psychologists to reconsider their scope of practice in order to respond to the needs of their clients. Contextual demands have required a shift from the traditional child-deficit, medical model towards an ecological and multi-systems paradigm, suggesting a wider scope of analysis and action”.

It is envisaged that psychologists and other therapists will have to move away from the medical individualistic Eurocentric-deficit approach to a holistic, health-promoting and developmental approach. The medical approach is positivistic and individualistic which disadvantages a number of learners, especially black learners because of the way it is conducted. This approach views a learner as “having a problem” instead of viewing him/her as “experiencing a problem”. Using psychometric assessment, the medical approach classifies learners according to their mental ability.

This denies some learners the opportunity to be schooled in the same school or class with others as they are classified into different categories and education systems according to their assessment results. In order to rectify the situation, psychologists will have to operate as collaborators and consultants as it has been mentioned above. They will be consultants in the sense that they will have to consult with schools in order to empower educators on how to help learners who experience barriers to learning and development and collaborate with other stakeholders who have the will to care and support learners. Collaboration as seen by (Idol & West, 1991) is shared decision making in governance, planning, delivery, and evaluation in education. It is a pluralistic form of education where people of different backgrounds work together with equal status.

The role of psychologists as collaborators is at the heart of a more preventative, supportive and eco-systemic approach to education learner support. Collaboration in this context is of critical value and it should be inclusive of specialists. The role of psychologists as consultants in the collaborative team is very important because of their unique knowledge about cognitive matters and special skills they possess (Engelbrecht and Green 2001, p.22-23).

In the consultation process, there should be mutual respect of members in a team. According to Sandy, Kozleski and French (2000) consultation is a voluntary process and indirect in that the person in the consultant role provides no direct services. Consultation is based on respect, which means that the consultee has respect for the consultant's expertise but the consultant also respects the consultee's views. It also maintains differentiated responsibility and accountability for outcomes, as the ultimate implementation of the consultant's recommendations is beyond the consultation's control. The DBST as it is explained in White paper 6-special needs education (2001) should consist of all sections and other government departments and NGO's. It is in this team that consultation and collaboration that Engelbrecht and Green (2001); Sandy, Kozleski and French (2000) say should be exercised. This will then compel therapists to change their role. When therapists work with learners in schools, they must take into account the educational changes and consider policies that are in place about learner support and development.

Different micro systems like peers, socio-cultural system, family and school situation that affect the performance of a learner must be seriously considered (Eloff and Ebersohn 2004, p.320). This is not the case when looking at psychological assessment and evaluation conducted in the Free State child guidance clinics. The Free State department of education needs to address this issue in order to enhance the principles of inclusive education and OBE. The qualifications that therapists have and the competence they show in their work indicate that they do have the capability to work in the new inclusive education system. For them to work effectively, they just need to do a mind shift and adopt an eco-systemic approach to learner assessment and evaluation. Since most of them were trained in the medical positivistic model, they also need to adjust to the developmental learner centred approach. The developmental eco-systemic learner centred approach is compatible with the principles of inclusive education. It is also evident that since inclusive education is still in its infancy stage in South Africa, these therapists need to be capacitated on how to operate in an inclusive education setting. However, this does not mean that they do not have a role to play in inclusive education, there is quite a lot.

6.7 THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTING.

In an inclusive education setting, the core purpose of all assessment including psychological assessment is to identifying barriers to learning, point out where and how could they be addressed in order to promote effective teaching and learning (DoE, 2002, p.107). This means that the use of psychological assessment in schools should help to improve teaching and learning otherwise it must not be used at all. Foxcroft & Roodt (2001, p.2-3) see the purpose of psychological assessment as “to identify strengths and weaknesses, map development or progress, identify training and education needs, or assist in making a diagnosis. It can be used to identify intervention and therapy needs and measure the effectiveness of an intervention programme...” In such a scenario psychological assessment becomes developmental in nature.

Different education policies who call for equity, social justice, quality education and education for all, created a space for a drastic move away from a Eurocentric individualistic approach to a supportive, developmental and a holistic eco-systemic psychological evaluation approach. Educational psychologists and other therapists in inclusive education have the responsibility of knitting psychological evaluation practices into the curriculum and use it to construct an enabling environment for all learners to learn. That will enhance the principles of inclusive education in assessment and evaluation which promote the growth and development of learners. The introduction of inclusive education challenged psychologists and other therapists to rethink their scope of practice in order to meet learners’ needs.

The above discussion shows that psychometric assessment in inclusive education assumes a secondary role in learner support and development while this study reveals that a total majority of 80% of psychologists view the use of psychometric assessment as one of the most important forms of assessment. This indicates that psychologists believe that psychological assessment can still play a leading role in the inclusive education context but an assessor has to evaluate a learner holistically. This means other forms of assessment and evaluation must be used. Data must also be collected from the immediate social milieu of a learner. The aim of using psychometric assessment in an inclusive education context should be to identify learner’s breakpoint, give support where it is needed and draw a plan of action. It must be remembered that a plan of action cannot be drawn only on the basis of psychometric assessment. This is just one form of psychological assessment.

Multiple assessment methods must be used first before a decision is taken about the education plan of a learner. About 60 % of psychologists said;

P5: The assessment that we need to conduct in an inclusive education setting is a wide concept. As you assess you take a lot of other things into consideration not only the child's ability or disability also you look at his/her personality, social and family structure and support from school.

This shows that psychologists are prepared to use multiple assessment methods when assessing learners. Such an assessment approach is what is recommended in an ecosystem approach to learner assessment. In an inclusive education assessment, learner's family background is of vital importance in identification of a learning breakdown and drawing of a learner support plan (DoE, 2001). These psychologists are in agreement with what post-colonialism agitates when counteracting the medical discourse on the use of psychological assessment (Habermas, 1987). Psychometric assessment must not be used alone; it only measures a small portion of human's behaviour, so it must be used with caution. The study shows that besides psychological tests that were used to assess learners, clinical interviews and observations were also used although at a very limited scale. File analysis shows that clinical interviews were used 6 (12%) times and clinical observation 3 (06%) times. This indicates that in practice therapists in the Free State child guidance clinics prefer to use psychometric assessment more than psychological techniques. There is a disjuncture on what transpired in the interviews and what happens in practice.

In the interviews, therapists indicated that they use a number of assessment and evaluation methods but in practice they mostly use psychometric assessment. This shows there is no correlation between theory and practice. Despite the fact that therapists prefer psychometric assessment more than other assessment and evaluation techniques, they acknowledge that they do not have enough culturally fair assessment tools and techniques that they use. As much as they favour psychometric tests, they also acknowledge that the tests they use are old and are more inclined to misdiagnose learner's problems. Psychologists in the Free State education department are faced with this situation because the scope of test selection is too narrow. They have a very limited number of tests available to them for use with learners. Psychometric assessment tools that they use are informed by positivism as a theoretical framework. It then becomes logical to say psychological evaluation that they conduct is highly influenced by the medical deficit approach. This study shows that psychologists' theoretical understanding of psychological assessment is rooted from the medical psychometric approach.

What also comes clear in this study is that in an inclusive education setting psychometric assessment must help to develop the potential of a learner and not use the I.Q. score to make a decision. This is the view shared by Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999, p100), when defining assessment. They say,

“Assessment is not just about testing but tests may form a valuable addition to the process of assessment. ...It is clear that all forms of assessment have elements of measurement and evaluation but what is now emphasised is the positive aspect, namely the essential linking of a diagnostic aspect with classroom curricula and the growth and development of learners”.

This suggests that it is not always necessary to use psychometric assessment when evaluating a learner but if it is used, it must be for diagnostic purposes only. When psychometric assessment is used for diagnostic purposes it must identify barriers to learning including learning difficulties and programmes of action to address them must be developed (DoE 2002, p.107). It needs to provide a teacher with planning information to know what kind of support a learner needs. Any form of psychological assessment that does not motivate learners to learn and tell teachers what they need to do in order to improve learners' performance does not fulfil its educational purpose (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997, p.170).

It makes logic to say whenever psychological assessment and evaluation is used in an inclusive education setting; it must show good educational intentions. Having had about the use of psychological assessment and evaluation in an inclusive education setting; data produced in this study shows that the use of psychometric test dominates over the use of other psychological techniques like clinical interviews and observations. According to psychologists the use of psychometric assessment tests gives them an objective view of what the learners' needs are and thereafter how to plan for the teaching- learning instruction, so its use is indispensable in an inclusive education setting. This means psychologists attach more value to psychological tests than other psychological evaluation techniques. By implication it shows that very little has changed since the introduction of white paper 6 (2001).

This study suggests that the use of psychometric assessment in inclusive education system must be very minimal because of its discriminatory and derogative implications. Currently psychological assessment does not benefit learners who experience barriers to learning and development. This does not suggest that assessment tools must be changed completely; rather the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation must be revisited.

The aims of psychological assessment and evaluation must be to maximise the potential of a learner. It must be eco-systemic and developmental in its approach. What has transpired in the empirical study is that psychological tests used at the Free State child guidance clinics are unfair and bias against black learners. This has led to a number of learners being wrongly assessed and unfair decisions were taken for them. When a learner is experiencing a problem, it is not always necessary to psychometrically assess him/her. An assessor can first talk to a learner, his/her educator, look at his/her work; it is then thereafter that he/she can use a psychological test if necessary. If it is really necessary that psychometric assessment must be administered, it is recommended that a criterion reference assessment test must be used instead of norm reference assessment test. Some participants had a feeling that scholastic evaluation can be done without having to use psychometric testing.

Psychometric testing compares one learner to the other, which is not good. One needs to assess a learner in totality not only to use psychometric assessment. Psychological evaluation can be done by using clinical interview, clinical observation, making use of scholastic record or socio-cultural background of a learner. This calls for an assessor to consider the social, developmental, academic and emotional aspects of a learner when assessing. Assessment should help to detect the strengths and weakness of a learner. Some learners learn better through seeing or doing and are called “visual or kinaesthetic” learners. Such learners should be considered when conducting psychological assessment.

After a learner has been psychologically evaluated, he/she must be assisted at an educational institution which will be able to address his/her needs. Learners who need moderate support must be assisted in “normal ordinary” schools, those who need intensive support must be assisted in full service schools or resource centres (special schools) where there is relevant support. In the same sense, the DoE (2001, p.15) clearly states that

In an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services will be created in line with what learners with disabilities require. This means that learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools and those requiring moderate support will receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools or resource centres.

This is not a matter of placing a learner as such but a matter of meeting a learner's needs and providing the necessary support in order to make progress in his/her performance. What needs to be done is to check which school has the necessary resources so as to give support to that learner. Not all schools are equipped with support resources, if a learner's needs cannot be met at a particular school then that learner must be helped in a school which will be able to meet his/her needs. This means that in an inclusive education system learners are no longer automatically "referred" to institutions like special school. In fact the word "refer" should no longer be used in an inclusive education system. When one research participant was asked about how does she feel about referring learners to different educational institutions; she said,

P 6: in fact we should not use the word "refer" any more as it underscores the aims of inclusive education system. The school must create conducive environment for a learner to succeed.

This study advocates for an eco-systemic approach to psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. This approach shows its relevancy in an inclusive education context because it calls for the use of multiple sources of information when evaluating learners. It also promotes the use of assessment methods which puts first the needs of a learner and helps to maximise his/her potential. In cases where psychometric assessment must be used, this study suggests that Criterion-referenced assessment as opposed to norm-referenced assessment must be used. In criterion-reference assessment learners' scores (results) are compared to a set standard as against norm-reference assessment where learners' performance is compared to one another.

The results of a good criterion-referenced test should thus tell an educator exactly what a learner can or cannot do, at least under certain conditions. Results should give an educator an indication of adaptation of instructional process like change of method of explanation, time required to achieve the goals or more examples are needed (van der Horst & McDonald 1997, p.10; Sieborger & Macintosh 2002, p.13-14). A criterion-referenced test is designed to show how well a learner performs relative to an expected standard (what a child should know at a given age) or a specific objective. The items chosen for these tests are intended to reveal learners' strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge or skills.

6.8 AIMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In the past the basic function of psychological assessment in schools was to assess inter- and intra-individual differences. It was also used to determine and analyse intellectual disabilities or personality disorders that might be the cause of poor academic performance (Owen, 1998, p.13-14). This approach had features of the medical deficit assessment approach. The aim of the medical approach in learner assessment was to determine the disability category of a learner. At the end of the psychological assessment process, a learner would be assigned to a special educational programme like special or remedial education, or education for the gifted.

Such an assessment system resulted in a dual system of education, i.e. special education and mainstream education. This psychological assessment system would also discriminate along racial lines. File analysis in this study shows that there were more black learners than any other racial group who were referred to the Free State child guidance clinics for psychological intervention. The analysis also shows that a majority of these learners were recommended for either “special education” or “support teaching”. According to the assessment results, which meant black learners possessed an inferior “intelligence” in comparison to other groups. This was one form of racial discrimination.

Having had about the aims of psychological assessment in the past, in the new dispensation the aim of all assessment within education is identifying barriers to learning, and pointing out where and how they could be addressed in order to promote effective teaching and learning (DoE, 2002, p.107). This means that the use of psychological assessment in schools should help to improve teaching and learning. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p.2-3) see the new purpose of psychological assessment as “to identify strengths and weaknesses, map development or progress, identify training and education needs, or assist in making a diagnosis. It can be used to identify intervention and therapy needs and measure the effectiveness of an intervention programme.” In such a scenario, psychological assessment becomes developmental in nature. Since the introduction of Curriculum 2005 and EWP6 (2001) the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners had to be revised. About 65% of the psychologists in the research sample agreed that the aims of psychometric assessment must change. It is important to note that psychological assessment procedures should give a clear indication of the level of support that a learner needs.

This means that results and recommendations must translate into meaningful teaching and learning. This is one of the problems that some therapists in the Free State child guidance clinics experience as they do not have teaching qualifications and classroom experience (see Figures 5.1). Their training did not include teaching methodology, especially in a multicultural context. Psychological assessment should aim at building the strengths of learners and assisting them to grow. The new practices in psychological assessment and evaluation have been necessitated by the weaknesses of the old approaches. This does not mean that the old approaches are completely irrelevant or inappropriate and have no place in our education system. It is just that the psychological assessment approach currently used is rooted in the psychometric assessment theory which carries some features of the medical deficit model. The medical deficit assessment approach views the learning breakdown as originating from within a learner. That is why it has fallen into disfavour with a number of people.

The education department has adopted an inclusive education assessment approach where the learning breakdown is not only seated with the learner but with the environment in which the learner finds him-/herself. The difference between the past and now will be the aim of using it especially, in an inclusive education context. The main aim should be to look for the learner's strengths and develop an intervention programme. Assessment must be transparent, democratic, clearly focused and participative, and should be integrated into teaching and learning. The criteria for assessment must be understood by both the assessor and the learner. Learners should be encouraged to reflect on their learning. The psychological assessment methods used must cater for a variety of learner needs (language, physical, psychological and emotional) and barriers to learning. In any given group of learners, there are different rates and styles of learning (some learners have traditional "academic" abilities while others have "technical").

Different types of barriers will require alternative and/or adapted assessment methods. It is possible within the same type of barrier that there could be variations between the specific methods that individual learners might require. A specific barrier might require more than one assessment alternative. The alternative assessment methods will vary according to whether the barrier is long-standing, recently acquired, fluctuating, intermittent or temporary (DoE 2001, p. 9). The fact is that psychometric assessment alone cannot give all the accurate information needed about a learner and his or her academic progress. Assessment should aim at addressing the needs of a learner and be developmental. Assessment tools that are used should accommodate all learners in a South African context.

It is very important to consider learners' background as it will help to give accurate results and indicate what the needs of a learner are. Therapists can sometimes go to schools and talk to teachers about learners' performance; it is not always necessary to use psychometric tests. Psychological assessment and evaluation should benefit the examinees more than other interested parties. The main purpose of psychological assessment should be to improve teaching and learning, taking care of the total wellbeing of a learner and improving his/her scholastic performance. The understanding of learner performance in inclusive education is that all learners can learn if correctly supported. According to Vygotsky's theory of learning which is called the "zone of proximal development", a learner must be assisted by someone who has the capacity to do so in order to realise his/her potential. This means that each and every learner does have the potential to learn, but needs assistance from an adult(s). Learners who experience barriers to learning and development can achieve if only given the necessary support which addresses their needs. The level of performance of a learner can improve with an adult's assistance.

Through proximal interaction with another person (parent, teacher or peers) who does have the capacity, it is possible for a learner to achieve. To such learners, cognitive, emotional and social intervention is necessary to help them through proximal interactions to construct a new level of understanding (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1997, p.72). The psychological evaluation implications of Vygotsky's theory are that the assessment tools used to evaluate learners must consider that knowledge is socially constructed. Assessors must use assessment tools that are informed by social learning theories. When a learner comes to school, he/she comes with a bag of socially acquired knowledge that shapes his/her values, beliefs and understanding of the world around him/her.

Evaluation in general does not make any sense to a learner if he/she is assessed about something that does not exist in his/her social environment. Whenever a psychological test is used, the assessment score is not as important as knowing what the child might be capable of doing when assisted (Zone of Proximal Development), and where to give support (McDaniel, 1994, p.330). This is the philosophy behind inclusive education assessment. We need psychological assessment and evaluation policies which are in line with the principles and goals of inclusive education, good quality of learning and teaching, the improvement of the standard of living and economic stability. Implementation and monitoring of such policies is of vital importance. From the above discussion, it shows that there is a need for the support services to look at the validity and relevancy of the practice of psychological assessment and evaluation in schools in order to improve scholastic performance of learners and our communities.

This is a big challenge for our government, more specifically the Department of Education. In general, the purpose of assessment would be to plan for intervention or refer learners to relevant stakeholders. There must be a paradigm shift on the aims of psychological assessment. In the past, the aim of psychological assessment in schools was to place a learner in an “appropriate” educational programme like special or remedial education according to the results of the tests used. Alternatively, the aim would be to assess a learner and allocate a clinic number so that the school could obtain a special or remedial education post.

6. 9 CONCLUSION

This study indicated that the majority of the participants still subscribed to the psychometric assessment approach. They believed that psychometric assessment could still play a role in an inclusive education context. This was despite the fact that there is a lack of culturally fair assessment tools and techniques. The study shows that the use of psychometric tests dominated the use of other psychological techniques.

This means that very little has changed since the introduction of EWP6 (2001). The psychometric assessment tools they used are informed by positivism as a theoretical framework. This study advocates an eco-systemic approach to the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. This approach shows its relevancy in an inclusive context because it calls for the use of multiple sources of information when evaluating learners. It also promotes the use of assessment methods which puts the needs of a learner first and helps to maximise his/her potential. An analysis of the data produced through the use of a literature survey, structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and file analysis was synthesised. A synthesis of data produced through the use of the above mentioned tools was provided. The preference rating of the tests showed that psychologists preferred the individual intelligence test (SSAIS-R) over others for the assessment of mental ability.

Most of the tests used were culturally biased against the black learners who were evaluated. This indicates that therapists still believe in psychometric testing in spite of the criticism against intelligence tests. The fact that psychologists still believe in psychometric testing shows that they have been schooled in the positivistic approach of psychological intervention. Other evaluation techniques that were preferred were clinical interviews and observation. Learners were also evaluated by speech therapists and audiologists. These therapists used different assessment tools than those used by the psychologists. The file analysis indicated that out of 50 learners who were evaluated, 33 were black.

This shows that most black learners were experiencing serious problems. Out of 33 black learners who were referred for psychological assessment, 79% were said to have been experiencing perceptual problems (see table 5.5) Perceptual problems can be corrected through the support of a remedial teacher at school level. This means that there was no need for these learners to be referred to child guidance clinics. About 27% of the participants were in the 35-39 age group. This is an indication that a majority of them still have a number of years to practice psychological assessment and evaluation. Data from the questionnaires indicated that female participants dominated the research sample by 67% over males and there were more whites (58%) than blacks (42%). All the participants had relevant qualifications for working at the clinics in order to help learners who experience barriers to learning and development. The study shows that 88% of the participants spoke English as their second language and 58% spoke Afrikaans as their first language. This created a problem because the majority of learners who were evaluated spoke Southern Sotho. This analysis indicates that the role of therapists in inclusive education is indispensable.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, CRITIQUE, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 SUMMARY

Chapter 7 summarises and highlights the major findings of this study. Furthermore, the study is criticised, the focus being on its limitations. Finally, the chapter makes suggestions and recommendations for future research

7.1.1 Aims and goals restated

The aim of the study was to investigate the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics towards the realisation of the goals of inclusive education. In order to do that, four critical questions had to be answered by means of a structured questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and file analysis. These are:

- What are the assessment and evaluation techniques used by the child guidance clinics?
- Why do child guidance clinics assess and evaluate learners the way they do?
- What are the consequences of assessment and evaluation for learners?
- How do the assessment and evaluation practices influence the realisation of the goals of inclusive education?

7.1.2 Hypothesis restated

The hypotheses were that Free State child guidance clinics use different assessment tools and evaluation techniques. That showed there is no consistency in the assessment and evaluation of learners in child guidance clinics. Each clinic decides what assessment tool and evaluation technique to use. Child guidance clinics assess and evaluate learners with the aim of providing them with an appropriate programme to improve their scholastic performance or shape their lives. The majority of psychologists working at the child guidance clinics believed that the use of psychometric assessment was an answer to learners' problems. When this study was conducted, very little compatibility was found between the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners and the goals of inclusive education.

This was so because inclusive education was still in its infancy stage of implementation. The end results of all assessment and evaluation processes should be that some learners would be better assisted in their schools; some would be sent to special programmes like special education. The latter programme would have some negative implications to some learners and parents. The major hypothesis was that the use of psychological assessment tools and evaluation techniques does not help learners to progress scholastically and that there was no compatibility between the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation and the goals of inclusive education. This study does not recommend the use of only medical approach to assess learners who experience barriers to learning, instead it advocates for an eco-systemic approach to learner assessment and evaluation.

7.1.3 Quantitative operationalisation revisited

For this study, both qualitative (i.e. discourse analysis) and quantitative methods were operationalised. The reasoning behind using the two approaches was that they were complementing one another, which created mutual validation of results in order to get a more in-depth and complete picture of the concept under investigation. The use of an integrated approach results in greater scope, depth and consistency of the methodological proceedings than when one research method is used. A structured questionnaire was used as a quantitatively orientated instrument to measure the psychological assessment tools used by Free State child guidance clinics. A file analysis of learners referred to Child Guidance Clinic 5 was also conducted. This research tool was used to quantitatively investigate what happened during the assessment process; that is, what psychological assessment tests were used to assess learners. Perceptions and ideas on psychological assessment (i.e. use of psychological tests) and evaluation of learners could only be accessed through open-ended interviews. These interviews were later subjected to textually orientated discourse analysis. The open-ended interviews were used to triangulate the findings of the structured questionnaire and file analysis.

7.1.4 Quantitative findings revisited

The results produced confirmed the hypothesis that the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics are not compatible with the goals of inclusive education. The findings in Chapter 5 revealed that most participants have relevant qualifications for conducting the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners (see Chapter 5.4.1.1). A majority of the participants were in the 35-39 age group; hence, is assumed that they still have more years to practice psychological assessment.

What also transpired is that they needed more training in inclusive education. This indicates that although they have knowledge of psychological assessment, their knowledge does not sit well with the principles of inclusive education. The study shows that a majority of assessors were white females, while the majority of learners were black. This was a challenge to assessors because they did not share the same culture and language of the majority of learners.

7.1.5 Qualitative procedures highlighted

A semi-structured qualitative interview schedule was conducted with the research participants in order to get an in-depth understanding of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context. The researcher visited all five Free State child guidance clinics and conducted 12 interviews in total. These interviews were conducted with specialists (i.e. psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, remedial and special education specialists) on the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. A rapport on the aims of research, purpose, confidentiality and anonymity was conducted with research participants before each interview schedule could begin. The first question in all the interviews was formulated in an open and flexible manner. All the participants were asked similar questions and their answers were compared together with their feelings. Each interview session lasted for approximately 30-45 minutes. The production of knowledge and contextualisation of the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners was emphasised. The interview schedule used in this study was flexible and open-ended to allow research participants to express their views freely. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

7.1.6 Qualitative findings in a nutshell

The analysis and interpretation of data produced using interviews as a qualitative research strategy clearly indicated that there is a need to revisit the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by Free State child guidance clinics in respect of:

A. Selection, type and use of psychometric tests in different clinics

Looking at the data produced through the empirical study, it becomes clear that therapists believe that there is still a place for psychological assessment and evaluation in an inclusive education system. This is in spite of the fact that they said the tests that they used were too old.

These specialists do not have a choice not to use them, as they have very few tests available to them for use in their clinics. There is also no agreement amongst them on which tests are good for assessing “intelligence”. This shows that although psychometric assessment is used to assess learners, the tests are not valid for the population in which they are used. Another factor that invalidates the use of psychometric assessment is that the clinics operate differently. Learners are assessed differently with different tests and techniques in different clinics and this challenges the authenticity and usefulness of psychological evaluation. It is unfortunate that even in the era of the inclusive education system; learners have continued to be marginalised using psychological assessment.

B. The influence of age, race and gender of assessors in the assessment process

This study shows that 27% of the assessors in the Free State child guidance clinics are in the 35-39 age group, which means that they still have several years to practice psychological assessment and evaluation before they reach their retirement age. It was also indicated in the study that females dominated the overall research sample by 67% over males who were at 33%. This could have influenced the responses of the participants. Reasons for this could be that more females have been trained in psychology or that fewer men opted to work at the child guidance clinics.

Another reason could be that more females than males are comfortable with working with learners who experience barriers to learning. If this is the case, a lot of work needs to be done to show that it is not only the responsibility of females to take care of learners who experience barriers to learning. This study shows that 58% of the participants were whites and 42% were blacks. The implication of this is that the majority of assessors are whites, who do not share the culture of the majority of learners, who are black. This correlates with the data produced through the interviews and the file analysis data, which showed that many black learners were evaluated by whites. This has an influence on how learners are psychologically evaluated. This study indicates that there is a problem about who assesses whom, with what and how. It becomes a challenge to the Free State Department of Education if psychological assessment is meant to benefit all learners.

C. The influence of culture and language on psychological evaluation of learners

Delpit (1995, p. xv), when discussing power, says: *“I have come to understand that power plays a critical role in our society and in our educational system. The worldviews of those with privileged positions are taken as the only reality, while the worldviews of those less powerful are dismissed as inconsequential.”*

The use of psychological evaluation in South Africa was political and power-driven and this may still be the case. As has been indicated, psychological assessment was used to support the apartheid policies of the then National Party. Psychological theories and psychometric tests used are loaded with the white Western culture which did not take into cognisance other cultures in South Africa like the African culture. Since white people had more power than other races, they mirrored their culture as the reality for other cultures, which Delpit (1995, p. 24) calls “the culture of power”. When black learners are assessed with psychological tools which are loaded with Western culture they normally perform poorly. That does not depict their true performance. This shows that culture and language play a vital role in teaching, learning and evaluation. There is still a lot of discrimination in terms of race, language, culture, social background and whether a learner lives in a rural or urban area.

D. Compatibility between the aims of psychological assessment and principles of inclusive education

This study revealed that there is no compatibility between the principles of inclusive education and the aims of the psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. However, it must be noted that inclusive education is still in its infancy. Psychological assessment tools and techniques that are used in the Free State child guidance clinics are not in line with the aims of outcomes-based education. Foxcroft and Roodt (2001, p.352) echo these sentiments:

...with the advent of outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa, there are no South African measures that are adequately aligned with the critical and specific outcomes at the various exit levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It becomes logical to say learners cannot be assessed with psychological tools which are not aligned with the specific outcomes of OBE.

E. The role of therapists in an inclusive education context

The findings of this study also show that there is a serious shortage of therapists, especially black therapists. There is no black psychologist employed by the Free State Department of Education that is working with schools. The literature review in this study shows that in South Africa that black psychologists only began to emerge from 1980. Moreover, those psychologists were schooled in the medical discourse paradigm.

Their institutions did not yet offer training modules in cross-cultural psychology and psychological intervention in an inclusive education context. Some therapists find it difficult to suggest recommendations that will help improve learning and teaching instructions for the benefit of a child. All psychologists working at child guidance clinics are whites. Table 5.5 illustrates a situation where out of 50 learners; 37 were assessed by white therapists. This again challenges the validity of psychological evaluation done by white therapists as far as the language factor and cultural diversity is concerned. Psychological assessment is still Eurocentric. The qualitative analysis of the results reveals that there is a gap between what therapists do and what policies suggest. According to EWP6 (2001), the use of psychometric assessment is forbidden in schools, especially for placement purposes. However, the results suggest that nothing has changed in the way learners are assessed and evaluated since the introduction of EWP6 (2001).

Therapists still use psychometric assessment in clinics to assess learners, and feel that they cannot work without making use of psychological tests. This study also shows that there is a need to revisit the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners so that they become compatible with the principles of inclusive education system. This study provides a baseline through which psychological assessment and evaluation of learners could be critically analysed, especially in an inclusive education context. The findings of this study challenge therapists to change their scope of operation in an inclusive education context.

F. Inclusive education support services

Fig. 7.1 shows interplay of different aspects which play a vital role in learners' education support and development.

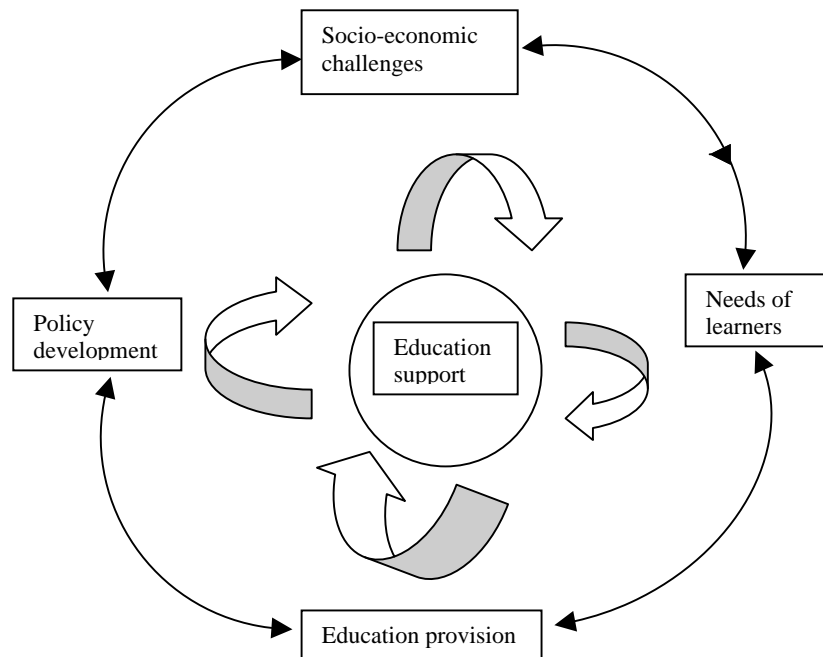


Figure 7.1 Education support within the South African context (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001, p. 20)

The figure shows that for an education support system to be effective there must be interplay between the abovementioned parts. In an inclusive education setting, these parts are totally dependent on each other. If one part is not efficient, the rest cannot function properly. The education support system will have to be strengthened in order to give the necessary support to learners. According to the DoE (2001, p.29) education support services:

...will have, at its centre, new district-based support teams (DBST) that will comprise of staff from provincial district, regional, head office and from special schools. The primary function of these district support teams will be to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. Through supporting teaching, learning and management, they will build the capacity of schools, early childhood and adult basic education and training centres, colleges and higher education institutions to recognise and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs.

The dynamic interconnectedness of the education learner support teams at provincial, district and school level ensures a move away from a fragmented and uncoordinated learner support system to the one which is curative, coordinated and learner-centred in approach.

In order for the education support teams to achieve their aims, they should move away from a positivistic, linear approach to an eco-systemic approach. This calls for the teams to develop a culture of thinking which embodies eco-systemic and inclusive values within a holistic learner support approach. The utilisation of education support team members who have specialised skills like psychologists, occupational and speech therapists, socio-pedagogues and audiologists becomes indispensable. The role of these therapists will have to ensure that the exclusion that learners experience in our schools and communities is reduced. Their practice will have to be developmental, holistic, preventative and health-promoting and operates within the collaborative framework (Engelbrecht & Green 2001, p.21).

Figure 7.2 shows a summary of the outline of the strategy to be used in learner support and development.

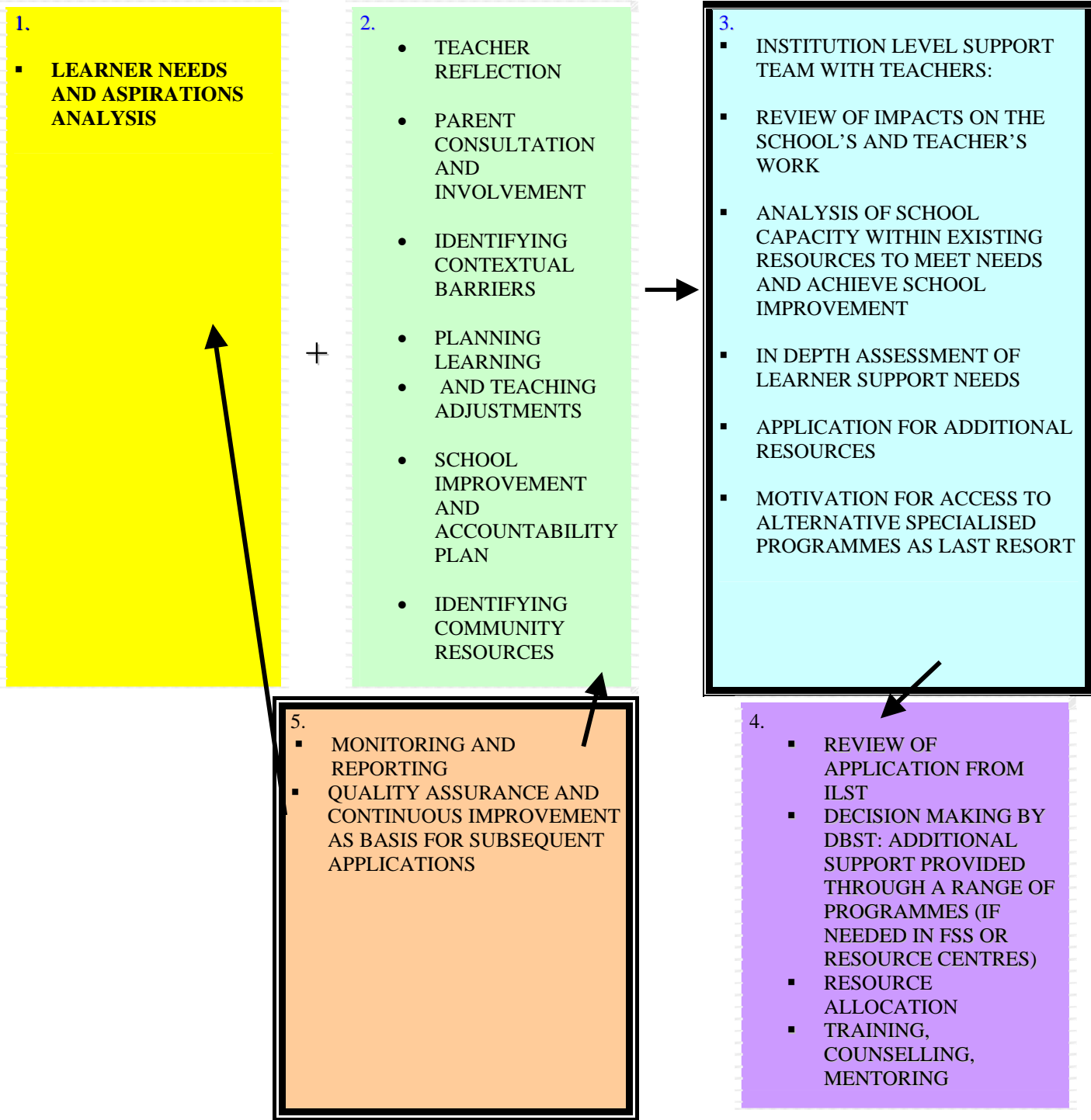


Figure 7.2 Flow chart for reviewable additional support provision

Children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds bring with them various cultural perspectives and values, and knowledge of languages other than English. The perspectives and values these children bring to the assessment situation can affect their attitudes toward the testing environment, the examiner, and the purpose of the assessment (Sattler, 1988).

Cohen and Spenciner (1994, p. 33) comment as follows about language and cultural background on assessment of learners: “Insensitivity to a child’s linguistic and cultural background can cause problems. One problem is that misperceptions once created can lead to misunderstandings between the examiner and the child about the benefits of testing and the behaviours expected of the child during testing.”

7.1.7 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics towards the realisation of the goals of inclusive education. The purpose of this study then was to provide an overview of the findings with an aim to recommending that the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners must be compatible with the principles of inclusive education. Based on the data produced through quantitative and qualitative methods, it transpired that the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners were not compatible with the principles of inclusive education. This was so because among other factors it seems that all assessors (therapists) were trained in the positivistic medical approach to learner assessment and evaluation. Their assessment and evaluation theoretical base is embedded on the individualistic Eurocentric approach which looked at a learner as having a problem and believed on the use of psychometric assessment as a corrective measure.

This study wishes to propose the use of eco-systemic approach to learner assessment, support and development. SIAS becomes the relevant assessment strategy to provide learners who experience barriers to learning and development DoE (2005). When this study was conducted, inclusive education was still at its infancy stage of conceptualisation and operationalisation at the Free State child guidance clinics. Therapists were still finding their footing in inclusive education. It is also concluded that what was said in the interviews is not necessarily what happened in the real assessment and evaluation process. Data produced through file analysis (see Chapter 5) shows that a majority of learners who were referred to child guidance clinics for psychological intervention were assessed mostly through psychometric tests. Most of them were black learners. This creates a distorted ideology that black learners experienced more problems than other racial groups.

This study argues that psychometric assessment should not be used to determine the level of support that a learner needs to realise his/her potential. It can only be used for diagnostic purposes. Psychometric assessment must not be used at all if it categorises learners according to their “abilities”.

In this study, the aims of psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by the Free State child guidance clinics has been discussed and defined through various discourses. The integration of research methodology, theory and empirical data provided in this study gave us the best possible approach to learner support and development. This study also leaves a possibility of other research findings, given the different theoretical lenses, methodology and empirical data.

7.2 CRITIQUE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study like others has some limitations. Some of the limitations of this research study are: not all clinic members could be reached as some of them were no longer working for the Department of Education and others had changed their job descriptions. Some therapists were reluctant to give their opinions on psychological evaluation of learners because they thought that might have implications for their jobs. This was in spite of the fact that the researcher assured them of anonymity and explained to them that the information would be used only for academic purposes. The study was conducted during the first phase of inclusive education implementation, when therapists were unsure about their role in providing psychological intervention and support to learners in an inclusive education setting. Further research on the latest status about the practice of psychological evaluation in an inclusive education setting is required. Parents, educators, schools, different health professionals and Learning Support Facilitators (LSF) are some of the important structures in learner assessment and evaluation.

The role and influence of these structures was not investigated because of time constraints and the fact that the study focus was on the clinics. Further research could be conducted on this aspect. Some questionnaires were poorly answered because some participants lacked understanding on inclusive education. Literature on psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education setting was too limited. This imbalance was overcome by using a wide range of literature on pure psychology and other relevant sources.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this thesis, it is recommended that the eco-systemic approach to learner support and development be adopted as a guiding approach in an inclusive education context. It is argued that the positivistic paradigm in learner support and development should not be the key approach as it tends to focus on learner deficiency rather than on potential and possibilities.

In the implementation of inclusive education, it is advisable to revisit the use of psychometric assessment and the role of therapists. Special schools should work closely with mainstream schools and DBST. This will facilitate the implementation of SIAS and the correct placement of learners who need additional support. Therapists need to work as members of DBST and act as “consultants” and “collaborators” and be actively involved in psychological assessment policy issues. Continuous meetings and interactions between therapists, inclusive education support personnel, other units in the department of education, government departments, higher education, non-government organisations, community-based organisations and other relevant stakeholders should be encouraged. This would enable the educational delivery services support to render quality service to learners who experience barriers to learning and development. Learners who have been erroneously placed in special education should be correctly placed in mainstreams schools. This requires a full investigation of special education and special schools. Parents and learners should participate fully in the process of learner support and development. SIAS as an assessment strategy should be used to support learners who experience barriers to learning and development.

7.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In order to achieve the aims of a future study, it is suggested that all researchers who have interests in psychological assessment and evaluation of learners in an inclusive education context should increase the scope of population and sample. The implication is that the study should not confine itself to child guidance clinics; parents, learners, inclusive education support personnel, policy makers and other relevant stakeholders must be part of the research participants. Different research paradigms, theoretical framework(s) and data analysis strategies could be employed to investigate the same concept. Other standardised research production tools could also be used to examine other variables which might yield different findings. Future research must help in the development of diagnostic tools and learner support programs. Such research should assist in the formulation and strengthening of a research paradigm and tradition that aims at the implementation of supportive assessment strategies in schools. Future research of this nature should investigate the whole concept of psychological assessment and evaluation deeply, as it was not possible for this study to investigate this concept in totality because of time and financial constraints. Themes that have been developed in this thesis could be closely and independently studied.

The objectives would be to find out which of these themes could influence the aims of using psychometric assessment in an inclusive education context. Similar research could be conducted in other provinces on how learners who experience barriers to learning and development are assessed and supported.

Another study of a similar nature could be conducted in the Free State to find out whether findings of this study could be repeated. Further findings could also be reported as further research based on the current thesis. Another investigation could be conducted as to check if the beliefs of therapists about the use of psychometric assessment in an inclusive education setting are still the same as it is indicated in this thesis. Another research could also look at what the policy on inclusive education (EWP6 2001) states and what are the practices that therapists employ in the process of learner support and development. The interviews with the sample therapists could be analysed further beyond the textually oriented discourse (TODA) through the means of other variations of discourse analysis.

7.5 FINAL WORD

This study challenges the use of psychometric assessment to place learners who experience barriers to learning to special settings such as special education. The move towards inclusive education system necessitated a change on the use and aims of psychological assessment of learners in schools. This then compelled therapists to change their scope of operation from an individual, Eurocentric approach to the eco-systemic approach. They have to work as consultants and collaborators in helping teachers and parents in order to assist learners who experience barriers to learning to realise their potential. The emergence of the inclusive education system provided therapists in the education system with an opportunity to show the importance of their profession. The eco-systemic approach to psychological assessment and evaluation is fore grounded as the approach best suited for learner support in an inclusive education context. The approach becomes suitable in an inclusive education setting because it makes use of alternative methods of assessment and evaluation. It is holistic and humanistic in nature. This study promotes the use of multiple assessment and evaluation methods for learner support and development.

This study provides a theoretical understanding that when psychological assessment and evaluation of learners is carried out, it must make them realise their potential rather than categorising and placing them in special settings. A decision about a learner(s) cannot be taken based on the results of only psychometric assessment. The study also acknowledges that although psychometric assessment is heavily criticised by a number of people, psychologists feel that it can still be used in an inclusive education system. The aim will no longer be merely to place learners in special settings, but to point out the weak and strong points for a plan of action to be taken. The aim of assessment and evaluation should be to enhance teaching and learning.

The new role of therapists, especially psychologists, in an inclusive education setting should be to work as collaborators with the DBST and as “consultants” at schools as opposed to individual intervention. The latter will happen only in exceptional cases and through a proper inclusive referral system. Therapists should empower schools and communities on how to help learners who experience barriers to learning. This is the right time for psychology as a profession to show its importance to the education system.

It is the responsibility of psychology as a profession to develop psychological intervention strategies which will be compatible with the diverse, multicultural South African society. Such strategies need to consider the influence of culture, language and fast developing technology in all spheres. All relevant stakeholders, including parents, learners, institutions of higher learning, government departments and teachers, must be involved in the development of psychological strategies that aim at unleashing learner potential and development (Delpit 1995, p.20). It is time to look at how the use of psychological intervention negatively or positively influences our education system and how to deal with it in a constructive manner. The majority of learners must benefit from psychological assessment and evaluation; otherwise, it must not be used at all.

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18/11/2003

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Mr. S.P. Radebe (reg. no. 200201618) is a student in the School of Educational Studies, Faculty of Humanities. He is currently registered for the Doctorate in Education (D. Ed) researching an area in educational psychology. Any assistance rendered to him in his research will be appreciated. Information will be treated as confidential and a high level of anonymity will be exercised. If further information is required please contact me.

Dr. Z. Naidoo
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13/09/2004

The Head

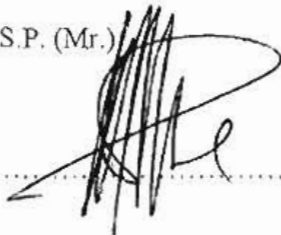
Free State Child Guidance Clinic

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a registered Doctoral student (D.Ed.) at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Durban-Westville campus) for the current year 2004 in the school of educational studies. I am currently conducting a research study in all the Free State child guidance clinics on psychological assessment and evaluation of learners. The topic for my thesis is **Psychological assessment and evaluation of learners by Free State child guidance clinics towards the realization of the goals of Inclusive Education**. Amongst other requirements for the completion of my thesis is that I must conduct a research study in all child guidance clinics. I therefore ask for your permission to conduct this research study at your clinic. Information collected will be confidential and I promise to guarantee the anonymity of the participants. All information will be used only for the purpose of this research study. Findings will be communicated to you once the study is completed.

Thanking you in anticipation

Radebe, S.P. (Mr.)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S.P. Radebe', written over a horizontal dotted line.



Enquiries : Mrs M V Wessels/
Reference no. : 16/4/1/51-2003

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2003-11-27

MR SP Radebe
P/Bag X06
BETHLEHEM
9700

Dear Mr Radebe

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project.
2. Research topic: **Assessment and evaluation of learners by Free State Child Guidance Clinics: towards the realisation of the goals of Inclusive Education.**
3. Your research project has been registered and you may conduct research in the Free State Department of Education under the following conditions:
 - 3.1 The staff members at Child Guidance Clinics participate voluntarily in the project.
 - 3.2 The names of the staff members at Child Guidance Clinics and the learners involved remain confidential.
 - 3.3 This letter is shown to all participating persons.
4. You are requested to donate to the Free State Department of Education:
 - 4.1 A computer disc with the summary of your report on it so that the summary may be placed on the Intranet of the Department.
 - 4.2 A report on this study which will be placed in the Education Library, Bloemfontein.
5. Once your project is complete, we should appreciate it if you would present your findings to the relevant persons in the FS Department of Education. This will increase the possibility of implementing your findings wherever possible.
6. Would you please write a letter **accepting the above conditions**? Address this letter to:

The Head: Education, for attention: CES: IRRISS
Room 1204, Provincial Government Building
Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301

7. We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

JS Tladi
Chief Director: Strategic Management Services

cc Directors of Districts: Motheo, Northern Free State, Lejweleputswa, Thabo Mofutsanyana, Xhariep
Department of Education ∇ Departement van Onderwys ∇ Lefapha la Thuto

P/bag X06

Bethlehem

9700

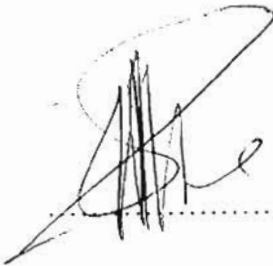
The Head
Education, CES: IRRISS
Private Bag X20565
Bloemfontein
9301

Acceptance of conditions to conduct research

Thank you for the letter granting me permission to conduct research at the Free State Child Guidance Clinics. I wish to declare that I accept the conditions as set out in your letter.

Yours faithfully

S.P. Radebe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S.P. Radebe', written over a horizontal dotted line. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE CODE BELOW:

<p align="right">c.17-18</p> <p>1. CLINIC</p> <p>Saolburg.....01 Welkom.....02 Kroonstad.....03 Bloemfontein.....04 Bethlehem.....05</p>	<p align="center">8 STANDARD OF EDUCATION</p> <p>Please write in your educational qualifications.</p> <p>1..... 2..... 3..... 4.....</p>
<p align="right">c.19</p> <p>2. RACE</p> <p>White.....1 Black.....2 Asian.....3 Coloured.....4</p>	<p align="center">9 WORK EXPERIENCE</p> <p>Please list your professional experience below,</p> <p>1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... 6..... 7..... 8..... 9..... 10..... 11..... 12..... 13..... 14.....</p>
<p>Would you please indicate to me which of these age categories you fall into:</p> <p align="right">c.20-21</p> <p>3. AGE</p> <p>25 - 29 Years.....04 30 - 34 Years.....05 35 - 39 Years.....06 40 - 44 Years.....07 45 - 49 Years.....08 50 - 54 Years.....09 55 - 59 Years.....10 60 - 65 Years.....11</p>	<p align="center">10. REASONS</p> <p>What motivated you to work at a Child Guidance Clinic? Please circle all appropriate reasons to you.</p> <p>To work with young children in need.....01 Because of my qualifications.....02 Because of transformation.....03 Opportunity to apply skills that I have.....04 Focus on underprivileged learners.....05 Passion for children and their emotional well being.....06 My interest is on psychological services.....07 Helping learners who experience barriers to learning and development.....08 Helping educators and parents on how to help learners who experience barriers to learning and development.....09 I was looking for a job.....10 Because it is a specialised and privileged field.....11 Wanted to learn more about psychological services.....12</p>
<p>Could you please tell me what language is mostly spoken at your home?</p> <p align="right">c.22-23</p> <p>4. FIRST LANGUAGE</p> <p>English.....01 Afrikaans.....02 Zulu.....03 S. Sotho.....04 N. Sotho.....05 Xhosa.....07 Other (specify).....08</p>	
<p>Could you please tell me what other language is your second mostly spoken language?</p> <p align="right">c.22-23</p> <p>5. SECOND LANGUAGE</p> <p>English.....01 Afrikaans.....02 Zulu.....03 S. Sotho.....04 N. Sotho.....05 Xhosa.....07 None.....08 Other (specify).....09</p>	
<p align="right">c.26</p> <p>6. SEX</p> <p>Male.....1 Female.....2</p>	

<p>7. POSITION / Area of specialisation</p>	<p>Please write in your current position.</p>	<p>Any other (specify)</p>	<p>13 14 15 16 17 18 19</p>
<p>.....</p>		<p>.....</p>	
<p>.....</p>		<p>.....</p>	
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<p>.....</p>		<p>.....</p>	
<p>.....</p>		<p>.....</p>	

SECTION B: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

B1. Please look at the list of assessment and evaluation techniques / resources below. Indicate by means of a circle how you would rate the assessment and evaluation techniques / resources available to you to conduct assessment and evaluation of learners. If a technique / resource is not available to you, please circle the "not applicable" box.

CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN FOR EACH TECHNIQUE / RESOURCE

TECHNIQUE / RESOURCE	Very Good	Good	Fair/ Average	Poor	Very Poor	NOT APPLICABLE
HFD	5	4	3	2	1	9
BENDER GESTALT	5	4	3	2	1	9
GROVER	5	4	3	2	1	9
SSAIS-R	5	4	3	2	1	9
ISGSA	5	4	3	2	1	9
JSAIS	5	4	3	2	1	9
RAVENS	5	4	3	2	1	9
READING and SPELLING TEST	5	4	3	2	1	9
IN COMPLETE TEST	5	4	3	2	1	9
PLAY THERAPY	5	4	3	2	1	9
OTOSCOPE	5	4	3	2	1	9
IMMILTANCE TEST	5	4	3	2	1	9
AUDIOMETER	5	4	3	2	1	9
PENDULUM: ENG. & AFRI.	5	4	3	2	1	9
PPG	5	4	3	2	1	9
NARRATIVE APPROACH	5	4	3	2	1	9
CHECK LIST	5	4	3	2	1	9
DRAW A PERSON	5	4	3	2	1	9
GROUP TEST 5/6 & 7/8	5	4	3	2	1	9
ASB	5	4	3	2	1	9
JAT	5	4	3	2	1	9
HSPQ	5	4	3	2	1	9
16-PF	5	4	3	2	1	9
SSHA	5	4	3	2	1	9
JPQ	5	4	3	2	1	9
SAPQ	5	4	3	2	1	9
19-FII	5	4	3	2	1	9

ANY OTHER (SPECIFY)						
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9

ANSWER B2 ONLY IF YOU HAVE RATED ANY TECHNIQUE/RESOURCE AVAILABLE AS "VERY POOR"

B2. Please tell me why you rated a technique (s) as very poor?

Technique: Reason for rating it "very poor "
Technique: Reason for rating it "very poor"
Technique: Reason for rating it "very poor"
Technique: Reason for rating it "very poor"
Technique: Reason for rating it "very poor"

B3. Again, look at the list of assessment and evaluation techniques / resources below. Indicate by means of a circle how would you rate your preference of any of these assessment and evaluation techniques / resources you may need to conduct assessment and evaluation of learners. If a technique/ resource is not available to you, please circle the "not applicable" box.

TECHNIQUE / RESOURCE	PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN FOR EACH TECHNIQUE / RESOURCE					
	Most preferred	Preferred	Less preferred	Least Preferred	Not Preferred	Not applicable
HFD	5	4	3	2	1	9
BENDER GESTALT	5	4	3	2	1	9
GROVER	5	4	3	2	1	9

SSAIS-R	5	4	3	2	1	9
ISGSA	5	4	3	2	1	9
JSAIS	5	4	3	2	1	9
RAVERNS	5	4	3	2	1	9
READING and SPELLING	5	4	3	2	1	9
INCOMPLETE SENTENCE TEST	5	4	3	2	1	9
PLAY THERAPY	5	4	3	2	1	9
OTOSCOPE	5	4	3	2	1	9
IMMILTANCE TEST	5	4	3	2	1	9
AUDIOMETER	5	4	3	2	1	9
PENDULUM: ENG. & AFRI.	5	4	3	2	1	9
PPG	5	4	3	2	1	9
NARRATIVE APPROACH	5	4	3	2	1	9
CHECK LIST	5	4	3	2	1	9
DRAW A PERSON	5	4	3	2	1	9
GROUP TEST 5/6 & 7/8	5	4	3	2	1	9
ASB	5	4	3	2	1	9
JAT	5	4	3	2	1	9
HSPQ	5	4	3	2	1	9
16-PF	5	4	3	2	1	9
SSHA	5	4	3	2	1	9
JPQ	5	4	3	2	1	9
SAPQ	5	4	3	2	1	9
19-FII	5	4	3	2	1	9
(ANY OTHER (SPECIFY)						
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9
	5	4	3	2	1	9

- B4. In the list below are statements that people like you have made about the assessment and evaluation that is done by the Child Guidance Clinics. Thinking of your experience at this clinic, I would like you to indicate how much do you agree or disagree with each statement about this clinic.

PLEASE READ EACH STATEMENT AND CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE BOX FOR EACH STATEMENT. CIRCLE ONE BOX PER STATEMENT.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Learners, schools and parents benefit a lot from the assessment and evaluation done by the Child Guidance Clinics.	5	4	3	2	1
I clearly understand the objectives of assessing and evaluating learners.	5	4	3	2	1
I am really comfortable and satisfied with the way assessment and evaluation is conducted at this Clinic.	5	4	3	2	1
Assessment tools (psychological tests) are not adequate for different languages.	5	4	3	2	1
Assessment tools are used to compile effective programmes to assist learners.	5	4	3	2	1
Psychometric assessment (psychometric tests) can still play a vital role in an inclusive education system.	5	4	3	2	1
Scholastic evaluation can be done without psychometric assessment.	5	4	3	2	1
Culture fair tests are available for assessment.	5	4	3	2	1
The purpose of assessment and evaluation is to determine the learners' specific needs.	5	4	3	2	1
With assessment and evaluation the potential of the learner can be identified.	5	4	3	2	1
I am quite satisfied with the recommendations made after assessment and evaluation.	5	4	3	2	1
Assessment tools help me to realise the goals of inclusive education	5	4	3	2	1
The number of Clinic personnel is far less than the number of learners in schools.	5	4	3	2	1
Most Clinic personnel are either English or Afrikaans speaking.	5	4	3	2	1
Most learners benefit in therapeutic intervention than in psychometric assessment.	5	4	3	2	1
Therapists have a vital role to play in an inclusive education system.	5	4	3	2	1
More than one assessment techniques are used when assessing learners.	5	4	3	2	1
There is a move away from age norms and IQ assessment techniques towards those that show the potential of the child.	5	4	3	2	1

Barriers to learning and development are no longer seen as caused solely by factors within the child.	5	4	3	2	1
Children between ages 5-6 are assessed so as to determine their readiness for formal education.	5	4	3	2	1
IQ tests are better indicators of children's abilities than criterion-referenced tests.	5	4	3	2	1
In most referrals, there is no clear relationship between reasons for referral and outcomes of assessment.	5	4	3	2	1
Some schools refer learners so as to place them in programmes like special education and support teaching.	5	4	3	2	1
Learners clearly understand why must the Child Guidance Clinic assess them.	5	4	3	2	1
Child Guidance Clinics constantly re-visit the aims of assessing and evaluating learners and the relevancy of assessment techniques used.	5	4	3	2	1

ANY COMMENT (S) FROM YOUR SIDE

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire

TRANSLATED TRANSCRIP OF INTERVIEWS

The interviews were conducted with therapists at the Free State Child Guidance Clinics and other specialists in psychological assessment and Inclusive Education.

Researcher: What assessment tests and techniques do you use to evaluate learners at the clinic?

P1: E... at the clinic there are quite a few tests that we use. Mm...for intellectual individual assessment, we use the SSAIS-R which is in different languages like; Xhosa, Tswana, English, Southern Sotho and Afrikaans.... even though we use it for intellectual assessment, some prefer the IGSA because the SSAIS-R is not reliable; its norms do not cover all cultural groups.

Researcher: I understand that you assess learners who speak different languages like IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Southern Sotho, English and Afrikaans. Surely, language becomes an issue. E...how do you deal with the language factor?

P1: Mm ...in fact we use the interpreter to help us with language to administer the IGSA to black Southern Sotho and Xhosa speaking learners; we are allowed to do that....and for group testing, we sometimes use the Ravens; which is a Visual Motor Perception Test. This test is being used in a number of clinics although others do not like it as it does not give them any diagnostic feedback. We vary the use of tests because most of them are unfair and not valid for all cultural groups, for example one assessor conducted an assessment on a learner using the Ravens, the child' IQ was 80, so the child was referred for special education, later they then found that it was not true, a learner was re-assessed with a SSAIS-R, the IQ was now 109. Initially a learner was referred to special education which was then reversed and this learner was recommended to receive remedial education...it is suggested that before a recommendation is made, interview with the child or his/her educator, evaluation of his/her work is necessary, if still there is uncertainty then a psychological test like the IGSA can be used.

Researcher: Do you use the same tests all the time when assessing learners?

P 2: We vary the use of tests because most of them are unfair and are not valid for all cultural groups... The education department must develop psychological tests that will be compatible with the learner's needs. Once culturally relevant assessment tests have been developed, and then they should be used in such a way that they show the potential of a learner... Some people use assessment tools which are not relevant and out of context of learners' cultural and language background. We need to use assessment tools that can accommodate all learners in a South African context. It is very important to consider learners' background because it helps to give accurate results and indicate the learner's potential and needs.

Researcher: What is the aim of using psychological assessment...I mean psychological tests? And how does it enhance teaching and learning?

P2: ...we do recognise that psychological tests must be used to enhance teaching and learning... but in the past, the aim of psychological assessment in schools was to place a learner in an 'appropriate' educational program like special or remedial education according to the results of tests used...if not so, the aim would be to assess a learner and allocate a clinic number so that the school can get a special or remedial education post..... assessment is conducted differently in different situations depending on the reason for referral. The reason could be scholastic, emotional or family related. Different methods of assessment are used to assess learners. One might use psychometric assessment as one of the methods of assessment but not making use of the IQ score to take a decision. We believe psychometric assessment still has a role to play in an inclusive education setting; the only difference now will be what would be the aim. Presently, there is something wrong the way psychological assessment is conducted in this province. ...let us settle for specific battery of evaluations that will be common in all the clinics. Some people use assessment tools which are not relevant and out of context of the learners' cultural and language background. We need to use assessment tools that can accommodate all learners in a South African context. It is very important to consider learners' background because it helps to give accurate results and indicate the learner's potential and needs. Now we believe that there must be a paradigm shift on the aims of psychological assessment. The main purpose of psychological assessment in school,

especially in an inclusive education context should be to identify the weak points of a learner and draw a plan of support. We understand that there has been a lot of criticism on the use of psychological tests in schools but our general feeling as psychologists is that psychological tests can still be used even in future but not to refer a child for special education...but for diagnostic purposes.

Researcher: Do you think psychometric evaluation still carry any value in an Inclusive Education system?

P3: As far as I am concerned, evaluation can still be useful in an Inclusive Education system. In my experience children were always evaluated as a whole, and not only a test done as some people would like to believe. Assessment tools are still very valuable and can still be used effectively even in an Inclusive Education system. And I feel very strongly about that- especially if it is used by a trained person and the right kind of tools are used.

Researcher: Which tests can be used for diagnostic purposes and how can they be used?

P3: Mm...the reading and spelling tests can be used for diagnostic purposes. They are very good indicators of where the level of the child is and how to support him or her. In an inclusive education setting we recommend the use of spelling test and the IGSA for diagnostic purposes. The IGSA gives an IQ score but the IQ score is not always important it tells us how is the visual memory, reasoning and number concept of a child, then we can tell a teacher about the level of support that a learner needs or which perceptual modalities must be stimulated. We can then train a teacher on how to support a learner who experiences perceptual problems. ...Psychologists in private practice still use IQ testing and some schools continue to ask for the I.Q. score. A parent would refer his/her child to a private psychologist so as to know what is wrong with his/her child. This is seen as the medical approach to child assessment. What is required is to look at the learner's needs. As therapists we need not use tests every time we conduct psychological evaluation; sometimes alternative methods of evaluation like clinical observation and family background could be of help. The approach of helping a teacher to help learners is very good unlike helping an individual learner.

Researcher: How do you foresee the role of therapists in the inclusive education system?

P4: We believe that as therapists we do have the capability to work in the inclusive education system; it is just that we need relevant training. This does not mean that we (therapists) do not have a role to play in inclusive education, there is quite a lot. Our role as we see it is to support all learners who experience emotional and behavioural problems and to support teachers. Remedial specialists can help educators on how to help learners overcome their problems like to give didactic assistance. Special education advisors also have a role to play like to advise teachers on how to adapt the curriculum for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. We feel that inclusive education system is a good system because it takes into cognisance the needs of all learners irrespective of colour, gender, race, ethnicity, disability or academic performance.

Researcher: What challenges do therapists encounter in the process of assessing learners?

P4: You see! E...there are thousand learners who need our help as therapists and they are very few of us. People must realize that psychological evaluation is about helping a teacher to help a child; there must be a mind shift. The process that we follow once a learner has been evaluated is to give out a written report with a recommendation or recommendations to his/her school for the attention of the principal who would then disseminate the information to relevant people. Recommendations might be things like special or remedial education, intervention of an occupational therapist, medical practitioner, counselling or psychotherapy. Most unfortunately a number of teachers do not understand our reports. Clinics get a lot of referrals every month, so people just quickly write a report because of work overload. These reports sometimes just mean nothing to teachers because they carry little value...it is imperative that sometimes we go to schools as a team and give guidance to educators on how to help learners who experience barriers to learning. We will also have to collaborate with other specialists from other departments.

P 4: We think there is a misunderstanding of the interpretation of the implementation of white paper 6 on inclusive education. Some groups (education officials) see inclusive education as dumping all learners into one class. We (therapists) see inclusive education differently; it means including everyone to have equal opportunity to education ...

inclusive education says give support to all learners but we have not yet come to a point where we say how support will be given to schools. We have to clarify what we mean by inclusion. Another challenge is that teachers are not trained on inclusive education and advocacy is not yet done at school level. E... in fact, we are between two systems ... we still have special classes, special schools, still using the old philosophy in the new system, we have not changed yet. We think we need some practical guide lines on how to transform special classes and convert special schools into resource centres ... this is a process; we must do it step by step. We believe inclusive education is 100% good but there are two problems (a) too big classes and (b) teachers are not being given relevant support. We believe if all these things can be sorted out, this can work for our country.

Researcher: In your opinion, do you think it was necessary to introduce Inclusive Education?

P5: People need to understand the philosophy behind inclusive education and change the way they operate. This does not mean change for the sake of change; it means change because there is a need to change for good. In the education department, there are so many changes that have taken place. Some of these changes were not necessary, policy makers just came with policies which did not work for schools. There is gap between policy and practice. Inclusive education is still a philosophy not yet being practiced. There were some good things that happened in the past. We think policy makers do not have any understanding of what happened in the past. The evaluation of Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners using the SATB for instance was good but now that was done away with. We think there is still a place for this test. Although group testing has been cancelled, we still make use of group tests not for placement but to identify learning barriers and map out a plan of action.

Researcher: How relevant are the tests to the needs and cultural backgrounds of learners you assess?

P5: The education department must develop psychological tests that will be compatible with the learner's needs. Now, once culturally relevant assessment tests have been developed, then they should be used in such a way that they show the potential of a learner not necessarily to use the IQ score if it is an individual intelligence test. Most of the tests are unfair, for example one child was assessed using the Ravens, and the

child's IQ was 80, so the child was labelled a candidate for special education. The same child was re-assessed with a SSAIS-R and the IQ was now 109. The child's reading and spelling improved. It was unethical that the child was recommended for special education on the basis of the results of only the Ravens. It is recommended that an assessor must first talk to the child and his/her teacher, look at his/her work, it is then thereafter that one can use a psychological test. It is not always compulsory that one must use an IQ test when assessing. If it is really necessary that psychometric assessment must be administered ... would then prefer criterion referencing than norm referencing assessment. The relevance of psychometric testing will vary from population to population, town to town and from district to district. ... scholastic evaluation can be done without using psychometric testing. IQ testing compares one learner to the other which is not good. One needs to assess a learner in totality. He/she must consider the social, developmental, academic and emotional aspects when assessing. Some learners learn better through seeing or doing and we call them 'visual or kinaesthetic' learners. Such learners should be considered when conducting psychological evaluation. We do not 'refer' learners any more in an inclusive education setting. ... hate to use the word 'referral'; we do not think it should be in our vocabulary when we talk about learners in inclusive education. What we have to look at is which school will have the support that the learner needs. Not all schools are equipped with support resources, if a learners' needs can not be met at a particular school then that learner must be helped in a school which will be able to meet his/her needs. Those who experience severe barriers to learning and development must be placed in a resource centre where there is relevant support. It is not a matter of placing him/her but a matter of meeting the learner's needs and providing the necessary support in order to make progress in his/her performance. Basically that is how we think psychological testing should help a learner in an inclusive education setting.

Researcher: What is your opinion on using alternative methods to psychometric testing?

P5: E...let me say that this technique can be done in a narrative way just to understand a learner and thereafter draw up a support program for that learner. ... we need to revise the policy on psychological assessment of learners in schools as a matter of urgency because that is where everything starts. We must use a variety of assessment procedures

as an alternative to psychometric testing, depending on where is the barrier of a learner. Giving alternative forms of assessment is not an alternative but a must. We must use a holistic or what is called eco-systemic approach to assessment. When assessing you do not just look at how a child performs at school but you also look at other factors that affect his/her performance. ... in the Free State we still have a lot to learn in terms of using alternative ways of psychological evaluation of learners”.