

**EXCLUSIONARY AND INCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS: NARRATIVES OF GIRLS  
WITH DISABILITIES IN A MAINSTREAM RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**By**

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## **SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Signed: .....

Name: Dr Antoinette D'amant

## DECLARATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_ declare that:

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father Mr Ntokozo M. Manzi who taught me the importance of education as well as Louis Okon who believed in and stood solidly behind me throughout the academic journey.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In South Africa, young rural girls living with disabilities are often prevented from having access to basic education or at best, are restricted to special education settings. Even with the advent of Inclusive Education and White Paper 6, where learners with disabilities are encouraged to attend mainstream schools as far as possible, the concern remains that persisting negative and prejudicial perceptions of disability, counterproductive and discriminatory social and educational treatment results in the ongoing segregation and exclusion of disabled learners. This study aims to investigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that exist in the schooling lives of six young physically disabled girls attending three mainstream primary schools in deep rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, with a view to understanding ways in which these young girls with disabilities navigate these inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics. A commitment to foregrounding the authentic experiences and voices of these young girls led to the use of narrative inquiry in examining the lived schooling experiences of these young rural girls with disabilities. Inclusive Education and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory make up the conceptual and theoretical framework for the study and the study is situated within a qualitative and interpretivist methodological paradigm. The key findings indicate that girls living with disability have difficulty relating equally to their peers and educators and are often subjected to all sorts of abuse and insults by both the learners, educators and community members. In addition to these negative attitudes and stigmatisation, the physical geography of the schools and inflexible curricula further serve as exclusionary dynamics which these learners have to navigate. These learners' navigation of these exclusionary dynamics is aided by the positive intervention of the School Governing Bodies of the schools with the provision of physical learning aids, as well as the assistance and support offered to these learners by those peers who become their friends and the counselling services at the schools. It is still vitally important that awareness campaigns are launched in all communities, especially rural communities, to encourage an overall change in attitudes towards people living with disabilities, and intervention programmes are needed in all schools to ensure that young learners with disability are protected from abuse and insult.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| HRW-----    | Human Rights Watch  |
| NCPDSA----- | National Council for Peoples with physical Disabilities in South Africa       |
| CRC-----    | Convention on the Rights of the Child   |
| QASA-----   | Quad-para Association of South Africa   |
| RTMC -----  | Road Traffic Management Corporation   |
| RAFAR ----- | Road Accident Fund Annual Report  |
| SAHRC-----  | South African Human Rights Commission   |
| TAG-----    | Technical Assistance Guidelines on the Employment of People with Disabilities |
| UNCRPD----- | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities          |
| WHS-----    | World Health Survey   |

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1-----Ethical Certificate

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Appendix 5-----Interview schedule for the girls

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This introductory chapter focuses on the phenomenon under research, and the focus and purpose of the study. Furthermore, I discuss the rationale and motivational factors for the study. I also present the key research questions that guide the study, the significance of the study, the organisational structure of the dissertation and operational definitions of key terms used in this research endeavour.

#### **1.2 THE RESEARCH PHENOMENON**

In South Africa and all over the world, children (particularly girls with disabilities) have been (and in many situations still are) labelled, discriminated against and excluded from social and education activities. The model that explicates such discrimination requires that these children be removed from the regular society and placed in special educational settings. During this exclusion, they then receive treatment for their disability until such a time that “normality” has been restored to such a level that they will be accepted and their integration into the society will be tolerated. According to Wickham (2001), the treatment in these exclusive educational settings is focused on ‘rectifying’ the ‘wrongs’ in an artificial environment, dislodged from reality. However, within the educational sphere, girls who have been labelled as ‘disabled’ are not likely to find an escape route to avoid this level of segregation and exclusion from the general education system. Girls with disabilities are often restricted to special education settings. This arises because there is a general belief in the South African society that disabled girls do not have the potential of benefiting from the mainstream education. Disabled girls have to face the harsh realities of dual marginalisation and stereotyping: that of being disabled and that of being female. The potential these disabled girls possess to contribute to the authenticity of education for real life is often not recognised. Although there might be different considerations when dealing with people with severe and

multiple disabilities, the concern remains with the overwhelming majority of cases that valuable human potential is lost forever because of persisting perceptions, counterproductive treatment and ongoing segregation of so-called disabled girls.

The 22 years of democracy in South Africa should have included a celebration of possibility for girls with physical disability. The South African Constitution, National Disability Strategy, the Equity Bill, and the introduction of Education White Paper 6 which emphasised Special Needs Education are all aimed at protecting the rights of every South African child, yet girls with disabilities, and in particular young rural girls with disabilities, are still excluded from participating in formal education. In light of the above, this study is aimed at exploring the dynamics that exclude and include young rural girls with physical disability from participating in school.

### **1.3 THE FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

In South Africa, young rural girls with disabilities have been prevented from having access to basic education. The reasons for their exclusion are as a result of being physical challenged. Therefore, the focus and purpose of this study is to investigate those factors that lead to the exclusion and inclusion of young rural girls attending primary education in KwaZulu-Natal.

### **1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

The motivation for embarking on this study is based on the following grounds: personal, professional and academic. In the context of my personal motivation, my first cousin happens to be physically disabled from birth. After 8 years of her staying at home without having any formal education, I finally convinced her mother to allow her to go to school basing my argument on my belief that being physically disabled does not mean a child cannot attend school and access basic education. After fighting for her to be sent to school, my cousin refused to continue attending school on the grounds that she was often laughed at by other children. The refusal of this child to continue with her schooling prompted me to embark on this study in order to establish those forces that forced her out of school.

In the context of my professional motivation, I have been teaching for 8 years at the primary school level. I have observed that about 98% of young physically challenged (disabled) young girls drop out of my school on an annual basis. A colleague of mine from a nearby school confirmed my observation, also observing an alarming level of dropouts among disabled young girls. These observations are major motivational factors that have prompted me to embark on this research study.

From the academic perspective, a look at the literature indicates that a lot of scholarly works have been done on children with disabilities in South Africa and globally. For instance, Philpott (1995) worked on Amawoti: responding to the needs and rights of people with disabilities; Konar (2008) conducted a qualitative study of the relationship between disability, access and service provisions on the quality of life of the disabled in Durban. Similarly, Ben-David (2011) looked at the impact of negative influences facing children with physical disabilities in rural areas in South Africa. However, despite the array of studies conducted on children with physical disabilities, none of these studies have addressed the issue of exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of young rural girls from school. It is this existing gap that sparks my curiosity to embark on this study.

## **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following objectives will guide the study:

1. To examine the lived schooling experiences of young rural girls with disabilities.
2. To investigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that exist in the schooling lives of these girls.
3. To examine ways in which young girls with disabilities navigate these inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

My three key research questions for this study are as follows:

- What are young rural girls with disabilities lived experiences of schooling?



- What are the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that exist in the schooling lives of these young girls?
- How do these young girls with disabilities navigate these dynamics of exclusion and inclusion?

## **1.7 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION**

This chapter focuses on an introduction to the phenomenon under study, and the purpose and motivation for the study. This was subsequently followed by the research questions which guide the study. Furthermore, this chapter also consists of the organisational structure of the dissertation and the operational definition of terms.

Chapter two of this dissertation deals with the review of related literature. For clarity purposes, my literature revolves around children living with disability. Further, in this second chapter, I look at the causes of disability among children in society. Efforts are made to critically examine the cultural perceptions and attitudes toward children with disability. Finally, the dynamics that enhance the exclusion and inclusion of children with disability from school are explained.

Chapter three of this dissertation explains the assumptions guiding the study and also provides the conceptual and theoretical frameworks within which the study was conducted, namely, inclusive education and Bronfenbrenner's theory of bioecological theory.

My chapter four presents the qualitative research design and methodology employed to explore the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics which impact young disabled girls, and the selected focus on the narratives of girls with disabilities in mainstream rural primary school. In this chapter, the methods adopted in conducting the study are explained.

Chapter five comprises the presentation and discussion of my research findings. In other words, I present an analysis of the data collected from the field and discuss the findings that emerge with particular reference to the literature and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter six of this dissertation is a summary of the research, and includes my conclusions in respect of the findings reached, limitations of the study and recommendations for future study.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Those concepts used in this study are explained below.

### **1.8.1 EXCLUSION**

Exclusion is commonly understood as a process where a child with any type of disability is denied access to schooling. While it is generally admitted that the exclusion of disabled learners remains a key item in the broad agenda of research into educational exclusions and inclusions, researchers encourage a much broader understanding of inclusion and inclusive education to incorporate all differences among learners which could result in their exclusion, marginalisation, and the integration and inclusion of all those social groups traditionally defined as ‘other’ (Slee, 1996; D’amant, 2009). However, in my application of the notions of inclusion and inclusive education in this study, I will refer to exclusion as any type of school action that denies or hinders young girls with disabilities in any way from accessing quality education. My research investigates the existence and impact that any form of segregation, division and exclusion has on my sample on the basis of their differences, and uncovers any isolation, alienation, marginalisation and exclusion that my participants may have to deal with.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2015) argues that children with disabilities in South Africa face discrimination in having access to education. The exclusion of children with disabilities from education is a violation of their right to education as stipulated in several international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### **1.8.2 INCLUSION**

In this dissertation, inclusion refers to any action or process where young girls with physical disabilities are allowed to participate in formal education and where they are offered a quality

education that caters to their specific learning needs. The Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001, p.17) says that inclusion is “about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities and about supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met”. According to D’amant (2009), inclusion involves an educational vision based solidly on the belief of the inalienable worth of all individuals – one which views all human beings as valuable resources, actively encourages every individual to make their personal and unique contributions, and, receives and values these contributions for their richness and diversity. The notion of ‘valuing diversity’ is intended to allow “for the reconceptualisation of (pathologised) ‘difference’ and for the production of non-hierarchical plural identities, offering the possibility of reconceptualising human difference as something to be celebrated in a plural society and presents a departure from the categorical thinking that has resulted in the separation and hierarchisation of particular groups” (Benjamin, 2002, p. 09).

From UNESCO’s (1960) perspective, inclusion refers to a dynamic approach of responding positively to learner diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning. In the view of D’amant (2009, p.15), “inclusion is opposed to simply ensuring the smooth assimilation or integration of other groups into the dominant mainstream culture, but instead, focuses attention on changing the educational organisation of an institution; changing the curriculum to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, thus minimising barriers to learning, development and participation.” Inclusion therefore, is a notion that allows for the scope of human possibility for all peoples and social groups to be transformed.

### **1.8.3 DISABILITY**

Leicester (1999) refers to disability as a consequence of physical or learning impairment. According to Stough and Mayhorn (2013), disability is an impairment that may be physical, cognitive, intellectual, mental, sensory, developmental, or some combination of these that results in restrictions on an individual's ability to participate in what is considered to be normal in their everyday society. This study refers to ‘children with disabilities’ or ‘girls with disabilities’ or ‘learners with physical disability’, as the accepted norm in South Africa is to put people first and then the disability.

#### **1.8.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Inclusive education is not new policy. In the year 1948, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights promulgated Article 26, which says that education is a basic human right. Furthermore, Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) also states that individual countries must recognise the right of the child to education with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity. Sebba and Ainscow (1996) say that through this process the school builds its capacity to accept and provide for all children from the local community who wish to attend, therefore, by so doing reduces the need to exclude children. In this study, inclusive education connotes the process by which schools attempt to respond to all children as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring their curricular organisation and by providing and allocating resources to promote equality of opportunity.

D'amant (2009) argues that inclusive education advocates the development of enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners and that an inclusive orientation to schooling and education was believed to be the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming societies, building an inclusive society, and achieving quality education for all (D'amant, 2009).

From UNESCO's perspective (2004), inclusive education is seen as a developmental approach seeking to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion in the social sphere. Dalton, McKenzie and Kahonde (2012) understands inclusive education as schools that can provide a good quality education to all learners irrespective of their varying abilities (and disabilities) and that all learners will be treated with respect and ensured equal opportunities to learn together. Additionally, UNESCO (2004) opines that inclusive education cannot be developed in isolation from overall school development. Based on the above, most countries of the world have endorsed the Salamanca Statement which reaffirms the commitment to Education for All. For clarity purpose, the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action was informed by the principle of inclusion by recognition of the need to work towards 'school for all' institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, supports learning and respond to individual needs ([unesdoc.unesco.org/](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/)).

The move to Inclusive Education is seen as vital in ensuring an equitable and fair future for all learners regardless of their difference, with a clear commitment to equal access, non-discrimination and redress. The introduction of Inclusive Education to South Africa was done with the intention of affirming human rights issues and reversing historical inequitable education practices (D'amant, 2009). According to D'amant (2009), the project of inclusive education is best served by a commitment to the ongoing exposure and dismantling of exclusions.

### **1.8.5 NARRATIVES**

It is pertinent to say that “If we want to find out how people make identities, make sense of the world and their place within it – if we want to find out how they interpret the world and themselves – we will have to attend to the stories they tell” (Lawler, 2003, p.255). Riessman (1993, p.1363) says that “narrative is fundamental to the way humans organise experience, not only as individuals, but as communities and societies: our human perspective is that we inhabit an endlessly storied world.” According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative is an umbrella term that captures personal and human dimensions of experience over time, and takes account of the relationship between individual experience and cultural context.

In narrative research, the use of narrative is the perspective through which a particular story is communicated. In other words, a narrative point of view is the perspective from which the events in an individual's story are observed and recounted as it is or was from their own unique standpoint and perspectives. Although narratives are most closely connected with life history research, they can be an extremely useful way of more generally understanding the kinds of accounts people produce in qualitative interviews (Lawler, 2003). For the purposes of this research, narratives of participants will not be all-encompassing, as is the case in life histories, but will focus on their experiences and realities, and how they construct and negotiate themselves in the educational context of being young disabled girls. In this study, the voices of young rural disabled girls will be heard in the context of their exclusion and inclusion in the school.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I presented the focus and purpose of my study, as well as the personal and professional factors which have motivated me to embark on this study. I highlighted objectives of the study, and presented the key research questions that guide the study. In my next chapter, I will present a review of the literature that relates to this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study explores the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of girls with disabilities in a mainstream primary school in South Africa. The previous chapter focused on the introduction, rationale of the study, research questions and the operational definition of terms. In other words, my chapter one set the scene of this study. This chapter focuses on the review of the literature. I intend to begin my literature review by looking at the different meanings, classifications and types of disability. Furthermore, I will look at the people with disabilities within a South Africa context, the causes of disability and factors responsible for the exclusion of children in schools in South Africa. In addition, efforts will be made to critically examine the South African legislation and policies relating to people with disabilities.

#### **2.2 DEFINING DISABILITY**

Disability is a broad concept that is not consistently defined. The term ‘disability’ is used according to societal norms, medical entities, and governmental agencies that address disability issues. It is an umbrella term that covers impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. The term ‘disability’ refers to the malfunctioning or partial functioning of certain organ(s) in the body of an individual. This consists of physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness, and various types of chronic disease (WHO, 1980; Dalsgaard, Østergaard, Leckman, Mortensen, & Pedersen, 2015). Furthermore, disability is any restriction or lack thereof which results from an impairment of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered “normal” for a human being (Stough & Mayhorn, 2013).

In the South African context, the country is a signatory to, and has under Section 231 of the Constitution ratified, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on 30 November 2007. Article 1 of the said Convention defines disability as follows: a person or persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory

impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In a similar circumstance, Chappell and Radebe (2009) define disability as the functional loss resulting from impairment. However, Fulcher (1993), Bishop and Leonard (2014) maintains that social practices may transform a person who has an impairment into a person who has the identity of disability. Oliver (1986) cited by Huckstadt and Shutts (2014) opines that these social practices are the disabling effects of economic, social and physical environments.

Therefore, disability is also a ‘procedural category’ where impairment may or may not be present (Johnstone, 2011). The Disability Rights Movement (2008) defines disability as the disadvantage imposed by society on people with impairments. However, the Technical Assistance Guidelines on the Employment of People with Disabilities (TAG) (2002) conceptualise disability as a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or a disease which may limit a person’s mobility, hearing, vision, speech, intellectual or emotional functioning. For the purposes of this research study, disability refers to a child’s disadvantages in the context of the combination of personal traits and social settings (Samaha, 2007). This leads to the issue of the classification of disabilities and is explained below.

### **2.3 CLASSIFICATION OF DISABILITIES**

There are different classifications of physical disabilities. Taking into consideration the wide range of disabilities and differences in the severity of impairments, disability is classified with specific goals in mind. For clarity purposes, Hutchison (1995), World Health Organization (2001), Shakespeare (2013) classifies disability according to the following disorder; disease disorder or damage, loss or abnormality of psychological or physiological or anatomical function due to a disease disorder or damage, restriction or lack of ability in expected human activity, disadvantage that limits or prevents fulfilment of expected social roles, disadvantage that limits or prevents fulfilment of expected social roles and social structure, attitudes, and resources due to disease disorder.

The National Council for Peoples with physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPDSA) (2010) goes further and presents two lenses through which disability can be understood: the medical model and the social model.



### **2.3.1 MEDICAL MODEL**

Through the lens of what has been termed as the medical model, disability in a person is caused by disease, trauma or other health conditions which require medical care provided in the form of individual treatment by professionals (NCPDSA, 2010). In this model, ‘difference’ in terms of disability is pathologised and this calls for medical or other treatments or interventions in order to correct the problem within the person. Here, the emphasis is on the provision of treatments or interventions which endeavour to correct the deficits in individuals as best as possible (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013). According to Hanass-Hancock (2009), all interventions or preventions are based on assessment, diagnosis and labelling with the deliberate development of specific therapy programmes. Within the medical model, educational difficulties are understood solely in terms of deficits within the learners themselves and no attempt is made to look for the causes of learning problems outside the learner, such as those located in the education system or other factors in a learner’s social environment that may be affecting his/her ability to learn (D’amant, 2009). Within this model the individual and specific needs of the disabled person at this point are not taken into consideration (NCPDSA, 2010).

### **2.3.2 SOCIAL MODEL**

From the mid-1980s, the Disability Rights Movement shifted its emphasis from individual impairment to social inclusion. Therefore, in the social model, disability is a socially constructed problem and not at all an attribute of an individual (NCPDSA, 2010). Disability is constructed by an unaccommodating physical and emotional environment that is based on negative and discriminatory attitudes and other features of the social situation (Hanass-Hancock, 2009). This model holds that disability is not a medical condition, but instead, determined by the limitations in carrying out certain activities in daily living and the barriers to participating in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the community that this physical and emotional environment imposes on people with disabilities (NCPDSA, 2010).

Clearly, differences exist between the medical and social models. NCPDSA (2010) lists five main differences which exist between the medical and social models. For instance, through the lens of the medical model disability means someone who is deficient, ‘other’ or

‘abnormal’ in certain ways, while through the lens of the social model disability refers to the inability to perform a certain task because of certain impairments (NCPDSA, 2010). In the medical model, being disabled is seen as the problem and the cause of deficits within the individual, while in the social model, being disabled, in itself, is neutral. In the medical model, barriers to learning, development and participation reside within the individual, while in the social model, these barriers which are experienced are derived from interaction between the individual and the society, and more specifically from the individual’s environments and social situations not being sensitive and addressing the specific needs of the individual. From the medical model’s perspective, the remedy for disability-related challenges is to find a cure or to ensure the normalisation of the individual. Whereas, in the social model, the remedy for disability-related challenge is a change in the interaction between the individual and society, where the emphasis is not so much on changing the person but adapting the environment to best enable the individual to function more efficiently. Lastly, in the medical model the agent of remedy is the professional and for the social model, the agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate or anyone who affects the arrangement between the individual and society.

**Figure 2.1: Differences between medical and social models**

| Medical Model  | Social Model   |
|--|--|
| Disability is a deficiency or abnormality.   | Disability is understood as external barriers which hinder the efficient and effective function of the individual                  |
| Being disabled is negative.  | Being disabled, in itself, is neutral.   |
| Disability resides in the individual.  | Disability derives from interaction between the individual and society.  |
| The remedy for disability-related problems is cure or normalisation of the individual. | The remedy for disability-related problems is a change in the interaction between the individual and society.                      |
| The agent of remedy is the professional.   | The agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the arrangements between the individual and society. |

Source: Adapted from NCPDSA, 2010.

## **2.4 TYPES OF DISABILITY**

The level to which a disability affects an individual's life ranges from slight to major. For example, an individual's disability may not be visible, such as in the case of some cognitive disabilities. While in some cases, the disability is very obvious, like in the case of some physical disabilities. A person may have more than one disability. This makes the formation

of a list of types of disabilities a little bit difficult. In spite of this difficulty, Fasset (2008, pp.36-37) lists the type of disability to include “blind, visual impairment, congenital disability, deaf, hard-of-hearing and epilepsy which is a disorders marked by electrical disturbances of the central nervous system and typically manifested by seizures or involuntary muscular contractions. Others are mental illness/mental disability, physiological or psychological disorder, or a chemical disorder of the brain, mental retardation/cognitive disability, motor disability which includes Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Muscular Lystrophy, Lou Gerhig’s disease (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and Cerebral Palsy, trauma or stroke; paraplegia, quadriplegia and speech Impairment”.

## **2.5 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

According to Quad-para Association of South Africa (QASA) (2007), people living with disabilities is the biggest minority group in South Africa. The South African Census (2011) indicates that 7.5 percent of the population representing almost 2.9 million people live with some form of a disability. On a yearly basis, there are 1500 new cases of disability either resulting from abnormality in birth or accidents (Phillips & Noumbissi, 2004). According to the South African Census (2011), disability is more prevalent among females than males, that is, 8.3 percent for females and males 6.5 percent. Loeb, Eide, Jelsma, Toni and Maart (2008) maintain that the barriers people with disabilities experience increase in their life time due to the accidents people with disabilities are exposed to on daily basis. These scholars report that about 53.2 percent of persons aged 85 years in Eastern Cape and Western Cape and above are reported to be living with a disability.

**Figure 2.2: People with disability prevalence by province**

| Province       | Number of disabled persons | %    |
|----------------|----------------------------|------|
| Western Cape   | 222 333                    | 5.4  |
| Eastern Cape   | 472 106                    | 9.6  |
| Northern Cape  | 92 731                     | 11.0 |
| Free State     | 234 738                    | 11.1 |
| KwaZulu –Natal | 620 481                    | 8.4  |
| North West     | 254 333                    | 10.0 |
| Gauteng        | 485 331                    | 5.3  |
| Mpumalanga     | 205 280                    | 7.0  |
| Limpopo        | 282 797                    | 6.9  |
| Total          | 2 870 130                  | 7.5  |

Source: South Africa Census 2011

From the table above, provincial variations indicate that Free State and Northern Cape provinces have the highest proportion of persons with disabilities and it stands at 11.1 percent and 11 percent respectively. They are subsequently followed by North West and Eastern Cape 10 percent and 9.6 percent respectively. Western Cape and Gauteng provinces show the lowest percentage of persons with disabilities of about 5 percent.

## **2.6 THE CAUSES OF DISABILITY AMONG PEOPLE**

Scholars such as Murray and Lopez (1997); Aliber (2003), Bishop and Leonard (2014) among others highlight the causes of disability as including poverty, accidents, malnutrition and genetic disorders. These are explained below.

### **2.6.1 POVERTY AS A CAUSE OF DISABILITY**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child held in 2009 (CRC) has stressed that poverty is the major cause and a consequence of disability. World Bank (2008) also opine that a

significant proportion of disabilities faced by children in third world countries arise from poverty. Studies conducted by Bradshaw, Groenewald, Laubscher, Nannan, Nojilana, Norman and Dorrington (2003) in South Africa indicate that there is a strong relationship between poverty and disability. These findings are supported by the WHO (2011) which estimates that 50 percent of impairments leading to disabilities are directly related to poverty. According to Emmet and Alant (2006) poverty-related factors lead to preventable disabilities and these disabilities, in turn, perpetuate poverty.

In another development, Mitra, Posarac and Vick (2011) conducted a study on disability and poverty utilising data from the World Health Survey (WHS) focusing on presenting a snapshot of economic and poverty situation of working-age persons with disabilities and their households in fifteen developing countries. From the countries selected for the study, seven were in Africa, four in Asia, and four in Latin America. The major finding from the study is that disability is significantly related with multi-dimensional poverty in eleven to fourteen of the fifteen developing countries. Similarly, Hoogeveen (2005) adopted survey data from Uganda to explore those households that were headed by a disabled person and the findings indicate that both the incidence and the severity of poverty were worse than in those households headed by a non-disabled person. This assertion is supported by Schneider et al. (2008) when they conducted a qualitative study on women with rheumatoid arthritis - it was found that women with rheumatoid arthritis incurred additional costs because of their impairment for transportation, medication, and the need for extra assistance with daily tasks.

### **2.6.2 ACCIDENTS**

Road accidents are the major causes of traumatic injury worldwide (Diedericks, 2010). Within the South African context, there is strong evidence that road traffic related injuries often result in disability (Berecki-Gisolf, Collie & McClure, 2013). According to Juillard, Labinjo, Kobusingye and Hyder (2010), in South Africa 33 percent of the injuries sustained from road accidents result in permanent disability. The effects of these injuries on the productivity, career development, career progression, income potential, socio-economic status and often the career choices of the victims are enormous and often life changing (Diedericks, 2010).

Official statistics released by the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) of South Africa and published by Road Accident Fund Annual Report (RAFAR) (2010) indicate that the number of accidents with fatalities increased by 0.5 percent to 10857 in the 2010 calendar year from 10805 in 2009. In applying the global standard of an average of 20 injuries per accident, the expected number of people injured as a result of accidents on South African roads is 275360 per year (Diedericks, 2010). The South African Road Accident Fund (SARAF) summed up 262185 claims in the 2010 and also paid out R11.4 billion as claims compared to R4.8 billion five years earlier (RTMC annual report, 2010). This shows an increase of approximately 137 percent of disability caused by accidents.

### **2.6.3 MALNUTRITION**

Nutrition plays a crucial role in the early fetal life until a person reaches adulthood. Nutrition is essential for the survival of a person's health, growth, mental and physical development, productivity and performance (Schroeder, 2008). Childhood malnutrition is generally associated with concurrent and long-term global deficits in cognition, behaviour and motor skills (Schroeder, 2008). Most often, the resultant cognitive disorder is a mild intellectual disability with or non-specific learning difficulties (Adnams, 2010). Njenga (2009) argues that there is a strong and consistent relationship between growth-stunting and poor child development with moderate-to-large effects, and early childhood stunting has been shown to be a good predictor of poor school achievement and cognition in 7-year-old South African children.

In another vein, Kwashiorkor often occurs when there is a sudden alteration in the quality and quantity of the child's diet. This is characterised by the condition of being underweight with oedema (fluid retention), weakness, skin lesions and changing colour of the hair (Hoffman, Sawaya, Verreschi, Tucker & Roberts, 2000). According to Schroeder, Martorell and Flores (1999), there is strong evidence which suggests that malnutrition can substantially impair physical growth and retard the brain's growth processes to different extents, depending on the time of onset, duration and severity of the malnutrition. However, permanent disability may occur if malnutrition happens during the time of maximal brain growth (Schroeder, Martorell & Flores, 1999). Malnutrition particularly at infancy and childhood has a profound effect on

the growth and development of the child as well as susceptibility to infectious diseases (Mwadime & Baldwin, 1994).

#### **2.6.4 HEREDITARY/GENETIC DISORDERS**

Among the most common causes of disabilities are hereditary conditions which result from the defects in one or both parents' chromosomes or genes. A genetic disorder is a pathological condition due to a mutation in one or more genes (Bateman, 2008). Several genetic defects are believed to have caused different physical and health disabilities like muscular dystrophy, sickle cell anaemia, haemophilia and cystic fibrosis (Mezei & Schwartzman, 2009). Within South African context, Winship (2011) argues that approximately 60000 South African babies delivered annually and their families are in need of urgent assistance in dealing with serious genetic disorders and birth defects. The common genetic disorders and birth defects found in children born in South Africa are Down syndrome, albinism, neural tube defects, deaf, blindness, tremors, unsteady gait and fetal alcohol syndrome (Winship, 2011). It was reported by Winship (2011) that children with foetus syndrome are at risk of developing physical disabilities when exposed to certain drugs, chemicals, or environmental agents. According to Tsai, Floyd, Green and Boyle (2007), maternal abuse of alcohol has been linked to a wide range of cognitive, physical and behavioural abnormalities.

#### **2.6.5 UNHEALTHY LIFESTYLE**

Scholars such as Young, Boyd, Guralnik and Fried (2010) say that disability may be caused by the misuse and/or abuse of medication as well as the abuse of drugs and alcoholic substances. A study conducted by Hewitt, Rowland and Yancik (2003) indicates that there is increasing incidents of disabilities resulting from unhealthy behaviour. For instance, the issue of obesity, diabetes, cancer, poor cognitive function, stroke, and kidney defects are on the increase with the increasing phenomenon of unhealthy lifestyles (Hewitt, Rowland & Yancik, 2003). Wright and Aronne (2012) who argue that unhealthy lifestyles such as lack of physical activity, poor diet, smoking, alcohol abstinence, and heavy alcohol consumption have been



found to be associated with an increased risk of disability on aged persons supported this assertion.

## **2.7 EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL**

Recently, the South African government pronounced that it had reached universal enrolment in primary education. Despite this pronouncement, the reality on ground is a far cry from that. According to Martinez (2015), almost half a million children with disabilities have been excluded from the education system in South Africa. Similarly, Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2015) also indicates that children with disabilities in South Africa face discrimination in having access to education. The exclusion of children with disabilities from education is a violation of their right to education as stipulated in several international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has been stated that the absoluteness and universality of this right has also been internationally accepted in the form of the 'Education for All' millennium development goal (Martinez, 2015). In countries such as Germany, Britain, United States of America and Japan to mention but a few, the right to free and compulsory education has been conferred upon disabled children (Miller & Brow, 2015). Ironically, South Africa was one of the countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, which enable children with disabilities to have unrestricted access to education. This is in line with the 1996 South African Constitution which enshrines the right to education as a public entitlement and explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds of disability and the state is required to take proactive steps to prevent such discrimination.

Studies conducted by Klasen (1999), Russell (2003) and Slee, R. (2011) have revealed the systemic inadequacies that deprive disabled children from realising their right to receive quality education and training on par with their non-disabled counterparts. However, the most common justifications for refusing to enroll disabled children into mainstream schools are the risks of inorganic integration and the distractions posed to the trainers and other learners by such integration (Ferri & Connor, 2005). On the basis of this, parents who have children with disabilities are often compelled to send their children to schools which are equipped to handle the special needs of differently-abled children (Martinez, 2015). This led to the issue of legislation and policies enacted towards disabled children in school.

## **2.8 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL**

There are various factors that are responsible for the exclusion of children with disabilities from school. According to Weeks (2000), factors include: attitudes towards children with disabilities, stigmatisation, inaccessible physical environment and inflexible curriculum. These are explained below.

### **2.8.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

According to Kisanji (1995), MacMillan, Tarrant, Abraham and Morris (2014), people's attitudes towards disabled persons are almost always negative. For instance, children with disabilities are hidden away from public by the parents (MacMillan, Tarrant, Abraham & Morris, 2014). Schwab (2017) argues that overprotection and shame are the major reasons given for the perceived hiding away of children with disability. Poor attitudes towards people with disability are also reflected in the way they are being named. Kisanji (1995) illustrates how disabled children are named in countries like Tanzania and Zambia. This scholar says that names such as 'blind child', 'cripple girl or boy' and 'unfortunate child' are some of the negative names given to children with disabilities. The way in which the disabled children are tagged by such hurtful and derogatory names surely has negative effects on the development of self-esteem and self- concept of the children (Schwab, 2017).

Apart from the issue of negative name calling, people exhibit some level of anxiety in the presence of people with physical disfigurements and disabilities (Antonak & Livneh, 2000). So many nonverbal behavioural indicators suggest nervousness and uneasiness during interactions with physically disfigured and/or disabled person (Matziou, Galanis, Tsoumakas, Gymnopoulou, Perdikaris & Brokalaki, 2009). Earlier scholars like Sigelman, Adams, Meeks and Vaz, Wilson, Falkmer, Sim, Scott, Cordier, and Falkmer (2015) observed evidence of behavioural 'stiffness'; that participants move around less frequently and engage more in unusual self manipulatory behaviour such as touching their face or playing with their hair when interacting or communicating with a physically disabled person. According to Westbrook, Legge and Pennay (1993); Özer, Nalbant, Ağlamış, Baran, Kaya Samut, Aktop,

and Hutzler (2013) the public also smiles less frequently when they interact with people living with disability. There is also the possibility that people stare more at physically disabled persons, which indicates a perception of threat requiring vigilance (Antonak & Livneh, 2000).

### **2.8.2 STIGMATISATION**

A study conducted by Boyle, Boulet, Schieve, Cohen, Blumberg, Yeargin-Allsopp and Kogan (2011) indicates that the presence of negative attitudes towards children with disabilities is one of the most significant barriers that affect children from attending school. For instance, in Ghana children with disabilities drop out of school because of the high degree of stigmatisation by not only their peers in the class but also their teachers (Avoke, 2002). Similarly, a recent study conducted in northern rural Ghana indicated that children with disabilities are perceived by parents and other members of the community as not having any or a very limited capacity to learn, therefore, they are called ‘never do well child’ (Kassah, Kassah & Agbota, 2012). The stigmatisation of children with disabilities acts as a barrier in schools (UNICEF, 2012).

### **2.8.3 INACCESSIBLE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS**

Children with disabilities often find it difficult to have access to physical infrastructures in the school. A good example is the area of toilet facilities. Most of the schools lack toilet facilities for disabled children (Vernon, Lundblad & Hellstrom, 2003). Additionally, classrooms often have inadequate light and present as noisy environments, thus impacting negatively on the learning of children with visual or hearing impairments (Colver, Dickinson, Parkinson, Arnaud, Beckung, Fauconnier & Thyen, 2011).

### **2.8.4 INFLEXIBLE CURRICULUM**

One of the noticeable barriers for children with disabilities can be found within the school curriculum itself. Slee (2010) argues that when children living with disabilities are unable to access the curriculum, learning breakdown occurs. In South Africa, the nature of the

curriculum at all levels of education encompasses a number of components which are all essential in facilitating or undermining effective learning (Slee, 2010). Principal components of the curriculum include: the style of teaching and learning, what is taught, the way the classroom is organised and administered, as well as instructional resources which are used in the learning and teaching process (Slee, 2010). Therefore, the curriculum, resources used and teaching styles are all not friendly to children with disabilities.

## **2.9 SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION AND POLICIES RELATING TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

With the attainment of democracy, the South African government has passed some of the most progressive legislation and policies aimed at protecting the rights of disabled people. The government firmly entrenched disability issues in the 1996 Constitution which proclaimed that no-one in the country may be discriminated against on the basis of being disabled. In addition to this provision, a number of related pieces of legislation and policy have been passed into law which target discrimination against people living with disability.

Some of these legislations are discussed below:

### **2.9.1 EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT, NO. 55 OF 1998**

This act acknowledges that people living with disability are unfairly discriminated against both in the society and in employment because of ignorance, fear and stereotypes. Based on this, people living with disabilities experience high level of unemployment, and when they are employed, they often remain in low status jobs and earn lower than average remuneration (Naidoo, 2011). Concerning the Act, it is mandatory that all legal entities that employ more than 50 people must submit Employment Equity Plans to the Department of Labour, indicating the number of people living with disabilities that are employees and the position they occupy (South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) Report, 2002, p.22). In addition to the above, the International Labour Office says that, in South Africa, the need to encourage employers to be more involved in promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities is evident. Some employers are involved, and examples of good practices exist, but many more job opportunities are required for people with disability.

### **2.9.2 SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DEVELOPMENT ACT, NO.59 OF 1992**

This Act though passed before the advent of democracy in South Africa allows for the assessment of disability and care-dependency grants which are conducted by medical practitioners who evaluate information and determine whether disabled people qualify for the disability grant. The South African government offers the sum of R940 on a monthly basis upon the successful evaluation and acceptance of application (Social Assistance Development Act, No.59 of 1992).

### **2.9.3 THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY AND PREVENTION OF UNFAIR DISCRIMINATION ACT (EQUALITY ACT) 2000**

This Act focuses on the prevention, prohibition and elimination of unfair discrimination guaranteeing equality before the law. The Act clearly states that neither the state nor any person may unfairly discriminate against any person on the ground of his/her disability. Subject to section 6 of the Act, no person may unfairly discriminate against any person on the ground of disability, including denying or removing from any person who has a disability, any supporting or enabling facility necessary for their functioning in society, contravening the code of practice or regulations of the South African Bureau of Standards that govern environmental accessibility, failing to eliminate obstacles that unfairly limit or restrict persons with disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities or failing to take steps to reasonably accommodate the needs of such persons (Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000, p. 21).

### **2.9.4 SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT ACT 1996 (AS AMENDED IN 2011)**

This Act allows for the inclusion of learners with special educational needs. Public schools are required by law to admit all learners irrespective of race, sex, language spoken, among others and provide the necessary educational requirements without discrimination. However, a non-discrimination principle is not adequate in itself to ensure equality. For a person with special needs to be treated with equal concern, it is necessary to be vigilant about eradicating

barriers to participation constructed by the people in the society (South African Schools Development Act 1996 (As Amended in 2011)).

#### **2.9.5 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT (SDA), NO. 97 OF 1998**

This Act implements structures and processes in order to transform skills development in South Africa. The main purpose of this Act is to improve the employment prospects of all South Africans who previously were disadvantaged by means of unfair discrimination in the context of race, gender, sex, disability, etc. and to redress those disadvantaged group(s) through training and education (Skills Development Act , No. 97 Of 1998).

#### **2.9.6 NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY AND SUBSIDY PROGRAMME 2009**

The 1996 South African Constitution enshrines the right of every South African to have access to adequate housing and also makes it incumbent upon the State to pass legislation and other measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of this right. Based on this provision, people living with disability are eligible to apply for a housing subsidy which caters for home modifications if they are from a household with a monthly income of less than R3500. However, if the household's income of the person living with disability is above the stated amount they are eligible to apply for an increase in the subsidy amount to cover housing modifications that would adapt their home to their specific needs (Department of Human Settlement, 2000).

#### **2.9.7 CHILDREN'S ACT OF 2007**

The South African Childrens Act of 2007 was aimed at giving effect to certain rights of children as contained in the Constitution. The Act specifically sets out principles relating to the care and protection of children and are as follows; defines parental responsibilities and rights, makes further provision regarding children's courts, provides for the partial care of children, provides for early childhood development, provides for the issuing of contribution orders, provides for prevention and early intervention, provides for children in alternative care, provides for foster care, provides for child and youth care centres and drop-in centres,

makes new provision for the adoption of children, provides for inter-country adoption, gives effect to the Hague convention on inter-country adoption, prohibits child abduction, thus giving effect to the Hague convention on international child abduction, provides for surrogate motherhood, and creates certain new offences relating to children and provides for matters connected therewith (Section 1 of Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007).

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

Chapter two focused on the review of the related literature. In this chapter, I looked at the different meanings, classifications and types of disability. Furthermore, I presented and discussed the percentage of people living with disabilities within the provinces in South Africa. The causes of disability and factors responsible for the exclusion of children with disabilities from schools in South Africa were examined. Efforts were made to review some of the South African legislation and policies that were put in place to assist people with disabilities. Finally, I looked at the politics of inclusive education in South Africa as it affects disabled children.

In my next chapter, I focus on the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, I looked at relevant literature which relates in one way or another to my topic of study: the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of girls with disabilities in the mainstream primary schools in South Africa. Chapter three of this dissertation explains the assumptions guiding the study and also provides the conceptual and theoretical frameworks within which the study was conducted, namely, inclusive education and Bronfenbrenner's theory of bioecological system. These are explained below.

#### **3.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION DEFINED**

The scholarly discussion as to whether the conventional school can provide quality education for children with disabilities has been ongoing since researchers began to question the two systems of special and conventional schools. Inclusive education was proposed as an alternative system that can meet the needs of all learners irrespective of race, sex, gender, disability, among others (Ramsey & Algozzine, 2002). The principle of inclusive education was first adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) and was reiterated at the World Education Forum in Senegal in the year 2000. In a similar development, the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities (UNESCO, 1994) affirmed the notion of inclusion for people with disabilities declaring participation and equality for all. Henley, Ramsey and Algozzine (2002) define inclusive education as placing children with disabilities full time in general education classrooms with special education support services provided in the general education classroom. According to UNESCO (2004), inclusive education may be regarded as a developmental approach seeking to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. Dalton (2012) understands inclusive education as schools that can provide a good education to all learners irrespective of their varying abilities and that all learners will be treated with respect and ensured equal opportunities to learn together. Furthermore, UNESCO (2004) says that inclusive education



cannot be developed in isolation from overall school development. Most countries of the World have endorsed the Salamanca Statement which reaffirms the commitment to Education for All.

### **3.3 RATIONALE FOR THE INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY**

According to the Department for International Development (2009), education is viewed as a vehicle for the development of human capital, to improve economic performance, to enhance individual capabilities and choices in order for them to enjoy the freedoms of citizenship. Additionally, education is an important vehicle through which economically and socially marginalised persons can be empowered to change their life chances and obtain the means to participate fully in their different communities (EFA, 2005).

Studies conducted in countries such as USA, UK, Australia, among others have proven that children develop better physically, psychologically, emotionally and socially if they learn together with other children (Titz & Karbach, 2014). According to Haile and Bogale (1999), families prefer it when children are accepted within mainstream schools and programmes and believe that the fundamental problems of children with disabilities cannot be solved by excluding them in terms of where they live or where they are educated. Haile and Bogale (1999) argue that negative attitudes, prejudice and discriminating behaviour is bound to continue unless communities open their doors to children with disabilities and give them the opportunities they deserve and in fact, have a right to. This could be achieved through inclusive education where teachers place children living with disabilities on a path that teaches them how to participate actively in the society. Another important goal of inclusive education is to promote teamwork and ways of functioning and interaction with people with different disabilities (Haile & Bogale, 1999; Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2016).

### **3.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

With the advent of a democratically elected government in South Africa in 1994, the government developed a truly national system of education and training for all (Government Gazette, 1994). Section 29 of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates

that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible. This provision mandates the South African government to the achievement of equality and non-discrimination, and above all protects all learners (children with disabilities included). In response to the above, the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) was issued which outlines a 20-year plan for an Inclusive Education and Training System in South Africa across all bands of education. Furthermore, the White Paper describes the framework and funding strategy for the implementation of inclusive education in the country. In the White Paper 6, inclusive education and training includes acknowledging that all children and youth can learn, and that all children and youth need support, accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience, enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners, acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status and broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures. Others are changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners, maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning and empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.

Furthermore, the said White Paper 6 also indicates the distinction between mainstreaming and inclusion as illustrated below.

Figure 2.3: **Differences between mainstreaming / integration and inclusion**

| Mainstreaming or Integration  | Inclusion  |
|---|--|
| Mainstreaming is about getting learners to 'fit into' a particular kind of system or integrating them into this existing system.  | Inclusion is about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities.   |
| Mainstreaming is about giving some learners extra support so that they can 'fit in' or be integrated into the 'normal' classroom routine. Learners are assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, like the placement of learners on programmes | Inclusion is about supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The focus is on teaching and learning actors, with the emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners. |
| Mainstreaming and integration focus on changes that need to take place in learners so that they can 'fit in'. Here the focus is on the learner.   | Inclusion focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs. The focus is on the adaptation of and support systems available in the classroom.  |

### 3.5 BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

According to Matson (2007), Ljusberg (2009), Zampini, Salvi and D'odorico (2015), the benefits which children with disability derive from inclusive education are stated as follows: inclusive education assists in the development of friendships between peers and prepares children for adult life in the community. Others are: inclusive education has the potential to reduce fear and insecurity, build friendships, increase respect and understanding of fellow human beings, learning does not exist in a vacuum, rather, in social interaction with other human beings, and inclusion gives all children the opportunity to learn together, it allows for the efficient and effective use of educational resources and it helps in changing attitudes so that children are not devalued or discriminated against or excluded because of his/her disability.

Furthermore, Zampini, Salvi and D'odorico (2015) contain that inclusive education allows children to be together and learn together for easy integration into the larger society, it provides more stimulating environments, affords role models that facilitate good communication, social and adaptive behaviours, provides opportunities for children to make new friends and share new ideas and it allows for membership in a class and in the school.

### **3.6 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE**

The implementation of the policy on inclusive education as stated in the White Paper 6 is dependent upon a funding strategy (DoE, 2001). Though fiscal reality in the country is such that funding is not adequate, the time frame for the implementation of the inclusive education as stipulated in the White Paper 6 is 20 years. According to DoE (2001), conditional grants were proposed in the White Paper 6 for the first five years. Subsequent budgetary allocations have to be reviewed and reformulated. The expansion of special schools and resource centres, full service schools and district support teams were predicted as being achievable by the year 2008 (DoE, 2001). Wildeman and Nomdo (2007) argue that in all schools, change and transformation has taken place. In South Africa, the single most significant change for education brought about by national education is the new curriculum which is in existence.

All over the world, education is delivered through a curriculum. Graham-Jolly et al. (2002) says that a curriculum may be viewed as the authority structures of schools and its internal organisations, the content, structure of school syllabuses, textbooks and examinations which prepare children for adulthood, in a functional and productive role and in the broader society. It follows then, that the context in which the achievement of societal transformation and change is envisaged is through the new curriculum which advocates and provides for inclusive education within an inclusive community.

### **3.7 TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

According to Williams and Finnegan (2003), people's perceptions determine their actions. In a similar vein, Swart et al. (2002) argue that a person's perceptions and attitudes are often related directly to learning experiences provided by the environment and the generalised

belief systems of the society, while they also have a direct influence on the way in which they respond to the world. In light of the above, it appears that ‘attitudes’ may have a cognitive (learned) component, an emotional (affective) component and a component of observable behaviour (Swart et al., 2002). It implies that if the school teacher feels positive about a certain issue (based on his/her belief system), it will certainly have a positive influence on his/her behaviour.

In the context of inclusive education, one would say that teachers’ perceptions of inclusive policies will not only determine their acceptance of inclusive policies, but will also affect their commitment to implement inclusive policies (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Similarly, Cook (2001) maintains that the teachers’ attitudes towards learners with special needs appear to influence the type and quality of teacher-learner interactions, directly impacting on the learners’ educational experiences and opportunities. In a similar vein, D’amant (2009) conducted a study on ‘teachers in transition-becoming inclusive practitioners’ and found that teachers initially exhibit negative attitudes to inclusive education and White Paper 6 because of teachers’ general insecurity over, and mistrust of the new policies.

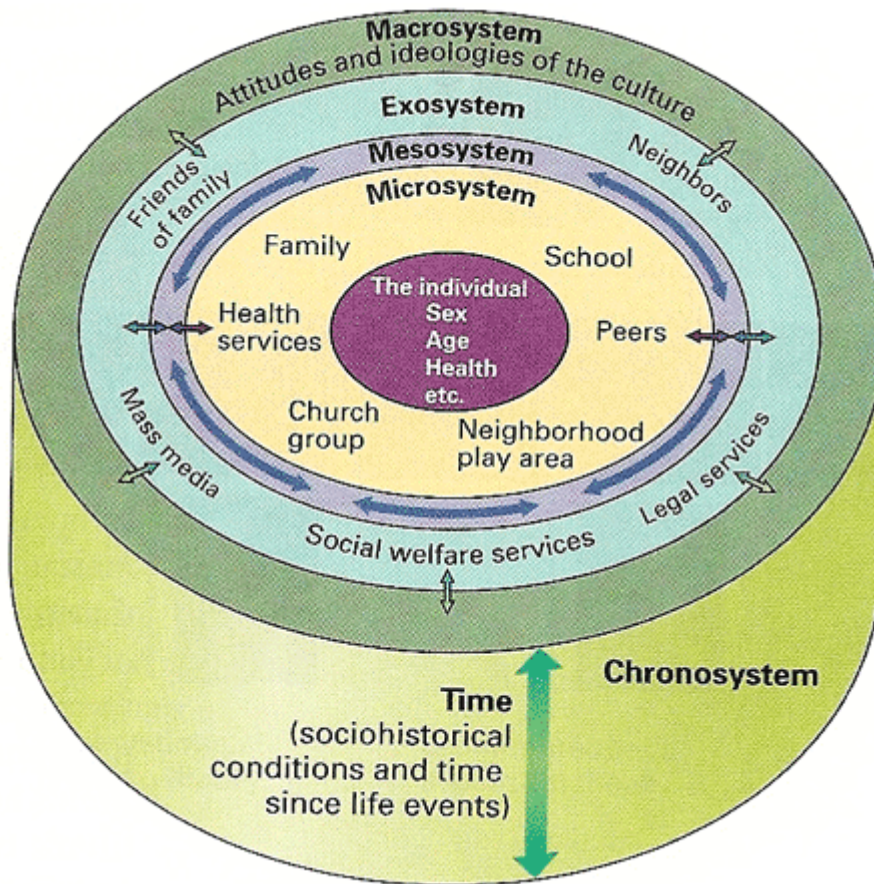
From the above discussion, it would follow that investigating teacher’s concepts and understandings of inclusion would assist this study in unpacking the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of young girls with disabilities in a mainstream primary school. This leads me to the next important issue of this dissertation and this is the theoretical framing of the study.

### **3.8 URIE BRONFENBRENNER’S BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY**

In a study such as the one under investigation, it is significant to have an explanatory framework within which to address and understand the negative influences that children with disabilities face in rural schools. The explanatory framing that best suits this study is Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development of 1979. Urie Bronfenbrenner is one of the world’s renowned scholars in the developmental psychology discipline. This model provides a ‘total picture’ of the developing child and thus makes a valuable contribution to understanding the interconnectedness of the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of girls with disabilities. According to Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield and Karnik

(2010), there should be a close linkage between one's theory, the methods an individual uses and one's analytical approach. The essence of a theory in any scientific research is to provide a framework within which to explain connections among the phenomena under investigation and also to provide the discovery of new connections. In Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, things are interrelated and also interact. It focuses on how children's biological features interact with environmental forces to shape their environment. Bronfenbrenner developed a model that shows that there may be various points of entry when trying to improve the life situation and developmental well-being of children with a disability (Skelton & Rosenbaum, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1999) argues that there are five environmental factors that impact a child's growth and development, and these are as follows: the micro-system, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. These subsystems are shown graphically and explained below.

Figure 3.1: **Bioecological theory**



**Source:** Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.2)

### 3.8.1 MICROSYSTEM

Bronfenbrenner (1979) says that a microsystem as a system of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing a child in a face-to-face setting with emphasis on physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interactions with, and activity in, the immediate environment. A good example of a microsystem is the family, school, and peer group. On a microsystemic level, the theory has a great implication for interactions around the child, as it is the environment in which they actually engage in.

### **3.8.1.1 FAMILY**

In this theory, the family is the setting that nurtures and provides a variety of opportunities for the child. According to Berns (2010), it is the primary socialiser of the child in that it has the most significant impact on the child's development. Additionally, the microsystem consists of physical characteristics like the size of the house, the amount of playground equipment, the number of books and other stimulating materials that the child has access to and can use to learn. Similarly, the system also comprises people that include family members and other children in the house. The family people, in turn, possess features that may be of great importance to the child's development, like the socioeconomic status and the educational standard of the parents. Subsequently, it is worthy to say that the microsystem is not constant, but rather, is constantly changing. Within this context, all relationships function in two directions, which indicate that a positive attitude from the parents will build a strong relationship in which the child is happy (Tudge, 2017). Conversely, if parents become stressed and irritable, child abuse becomes prevalent and parents become less able to provide a secure home in which their children can use opportunities to learn (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

### **3.8.2.2 SCHOOL**

The school is an environment in which children formally learn about their society. In the school, the teacher teaches reading, writing, numeracy and behaviour. Furthermore, the teacher encourages the development of various skills by being role models and by providing motivation for children to succeed in learning (Waugh & Guhn, 2014). It is in the school that the child comes into frequent contact with peers.

### **3.8.2.3 PEER GROUP**

The peer group is the setting where children begin to be unsupervised by his/her parents hence becoming independent. Children get a sense of who they are and what they can do by comparing himself or herself with his/her peers. According to Nash and Collier (2016), peers provide friendship and support as well as learning experiences in cooperation and role taking. This takes place most often in the community and the school where children play together.



In foregrounding this theory, in most rural areas of South Africa, due to the negative attitudes towards children with disabilities they are hidden and as a result deprived of this first social opportunity.

### **3.8.2 THE MESOSYSTEM**

The second structure of Bronfenbrenner's theory is the mesosystem. According to Berns (2010), this theory consists of linkages and interrelationships between two or more of a developing person's microsystems, such as the family and the school, or the family and the peer group. In Africa, there is a proverb that says 'it takes the whole village to raise a child.' This is the mesosystem of a child's life. In other words, the mesosystem focuses on the system of relationships in the children's microsystem. In the mesosystemic phase, adverse conditions lead to the isolation of families hence reducing networks or social capital within communities where this resource is pivotal, especially community isolation in rural areas (Mahoney, Gucciardi, Mallett and Ntoumanis (2014). In the context of this study, family and neighbourhood connections are of great importance for the already economically deprived children with disabilities. However, the mesosystem gives support for the activities going on in the microsystems (Berns, 2010). The micro and mesosystems are systems where the child is physically present and interacts.

### **3.8.3 THE EXOSYSTEM**

From Bronfenbrenner's (1999) point of view, the exosystem consists of the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings. In other words, the exosystem consists of settings or events that impact the child's socialisation even though the child has no direct role or control over them. The exosystem has an indirect effect on the child, the influences from the exosystem usually affect the child as they 'trickle' down through other community members in the child's life (Keenan, Evans, & Crowley, 2016). A good example of the exosystem is the distance from the child's house to school, certain infrastructural provision in the school that prevent children with disabilities from attaining his/her highest potential. This is a problem in rural schools where distances are vast, taxi drivers are unwilling to carry

children with disabilities and roads are inaccessible for wheelchairs in which the children move with.

#### **3.8.4 THE MACROSYSTEM**

Macrosystem comprises the society and subculture to which the developing child belongs (Trentacosta, Davis-Kean, Mitchell, Hyde & Dolinoy, 2016). This phase refers to the overall patterns of ideology and organisation that characterise a given society or social setting. According to Berns (2010), the effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading impact throughout the interactions of all other layers. At the macrosystem level, it influences what, how, when and where one carries out relations.

#### **3.8.5 THE CHRONOSYSTEM**

The chronosystem consists of the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environment. Elements in this system may be either external, like the timing of a parent's demise, or internal, like as the physiological changes, which occur with the aging of a child (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2015). The interactions, which take place among the different systems in the child's life gradually, change over time as the child grows. A chronosystem consists of change or consistency over time, not only in the features of the child, but also of the environment in which that child is situated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **3.9 CRITICISM OF BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY**

Though this theory is well received and adopted by both scholars and researchers, in recent times it has come under attack by opponents of the theory. For instance, one of the criticisms of Bronfenbrenner's theory is the difficulties to empirically test the theory and the broadness of the theory that makes it challenging to intervene at any given level (Sipron, 1980). Another criticism advanced against the bioecological theory is the assumption that systemic features are so interdependent that impactful intervention at some crucial point should affect other features, and set off rippling, reverberating effects that will alter systemic structures and processes (Tudge, Mokrova, Karnik & Hatfield, 2011).

In spite of this criticism, I find this theory useful in this study, because it has been an effective lens through which I have been able to investigate and better understand the ways in which girls living with disability navigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that exist in their schooling environments. The aspects of family, peers, and schools play a crucial role in how these girls navigate their way through the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that exist in their schooling lives.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter focused on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. I believe that inclusive education and bioecological theory are useful and relevant theories to frame my study and to investigate and better understand ways in which rural girls with disabilities are either excluded from or included in the mainstream primary school.

The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2010, p.20), research design describes the “procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom and under what conditions the data will be obtained. In other words, the research design indicates the general plan or how the research is set up, what happens to the subjects, and what methods of data collection are used.” In a similar vein, Seaman (2009, p.165) opines that “research design refers to the way in which the researcher plans and structures the research process. The design provides flexible guideposts that keep the research headed in certain directions”. Seaman (2009, p.174) goes on to say that “there is no such thing as correct design, this is because research designs vary from one study to another. Each researcher chooses a research design that is most useful for his or her research purpose”. Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) argue that the purpose of a research design is to stipulate a strategy for creating empirical evidence that responds to the research inquiry.

According to D’amant (2009, p.88), “conceptual, theoretical, and methodological coherence is paramount in ensuring that key principles run through every vein of the research process, from the overarching theoretical affiliation selected by the researcher, through to the choice of research paradigm and approach, selection of individual data generation methodologies, and how data is analysed, interpreted and presented. A researcher’s selection therefore involves an active matching process between all aspects of research methodology and the purpose, participants and context of the research, including the personal and theoretical affiliation(s) of the researcher”.

This chapter therefore presents the methodological design of my study and the rationale for the choices I have made. The methodological choices I have made have been based on what I believe are the best ways to investigate my key research questions stated in chapter one.

## **4.2 LOCATING MY STUDY WITHIN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

According to Punch (2013), the major difference between quantitative and qualitative research lies in the distinction between ‘explanation’ and ‘understanding’ as the purpose of inquiry. Additionally, the difference between quantitative and qualitative research is the distinction between knowledge ‘discovered’ and knowledge ‘constructed’ (D’amant, 2009). Furthermore, the essence of quantitative approach is to understand truth and knowledge as some external reality, separate from the knower, qualitative research articulates a view of knowledge as a social construction and of situated knowledge. Therefore, while the foundation of quantitative research is grounded in the scientific search for cause and effect, qualitative research on the other hand is rooted in the search for the understanding of human experience. In qualitative research, researchers seek to gain an in-depth understanding of social realities, human endeavours, interactions and individuals’ experiences.

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010, p.23) argue “in research studies, a qualitative approach is distinct from those used in quantitative designs or mixed methods. These authors report that while a qualitative design emphasises the gathering of data qualitatively, that is, gathering information by words and meanings participants attach to phenomena, quantitative design uses numbers or figures, while a mixed methods design focuses on a combination of the qualitative and quantitative designs. The characteristics of qualitative research are discussed below.

Adopting a qualitative research approach facilitates investigating exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of girls with disabilities in a mainstream primary school.

### **4.2.1 A COMMITMENT TO FOREGROUNDING AUTHENTIC VOICES OF PARTICIPANTS**

Flick (2009) posits that qualitative data is empirical data that involves providing evidence on real events, recording what people say, observing specific behaviours, reviewing written documents or probing visual images. I want my research to allow for diversity and an emphasis on the particular, situated complexities of my participants. It is important to me that the data generated through this research be authentic representations of participant voices, which highlight realities and experiences which are specific to my individual participants. I

want my interpretation of this data to foreground an understanding of the phenomena under study from the perspectives of individual participants. My selection of methodologies and approaches to my methodological choices are centred on foregrounding authentic representation of my participants in all their individuality and diversity, drawing directly on their voices.

#### **4.2.2 HIGH DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY**

A qualitative researcher, unlike a quantitative researcher, does not intend to test hypotheses that the researcher has formulated for the study. Rather, a qualitative researcher captures and discovers meaning when he/she has become immersed in the data (Merriam, 2009). In light of the above, Newman (2007, p.52) argues that “qualitative research uses reconstructed logic which is highly organised and restated in an idealised formal and systematic form, qualitative research uses more of a logic in practice. It relies on the informal wisdom that developed from experiences of researchers. Logic in practice is relatively messy, with more ambiguity and is tied to specific cases and oriented towards the completion a task”. Furthermore, Neuman (2007) goes on to say that qualitative research is more non-linear and cyclical. Rather than moving in a straight line, cyclical research makes successive passes through steps, sometimes moving backwards and sideways before moving on. With each cycle or repetition, a researcher collects new data and gains new insights. The non-linear cyclical approach of qualitative research is effective for the creation of holistic data which gives a sense of the whole or the bigger picture (Neuman, 2007).

#### **4.2.3 HIGH DEGREE OF CONTEXTUALISATION**

Context is critical in qualitative research Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006) contend that attention to social context means that a qualitative researcher notes what comes before or what surrounds the focus of the study. Context also implies that the same events or behaviours can have different cultures or historical eras. For qualitative researchers, the meaning of a social action or statement cannot be divorced from the context in which it appears and is very much dependent on this context. For qualitative researchers, parts of social life are placed into a larger whole, and whole serve to give meaning to each part, and therefore each part, without the whole does not have meaning (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) also argue that the context in the study is important

in qualitative research, since it is believed that human action in qualitative research strongly influenced by settings that they occur in. Human behaviour and responses can be better understood when the framework or the perspective within which the respondents interpret their thoughts, feelings, meanings and actions are known (Merriam, 2009). However, the context or framework is appropriate when collecting and analysing the data.

Merriam (2009) also contends that qualitative research has the natural setting as a direct source of data to the researcher and is key to supplementing understanding that is gained by being on location. Qualitative researchers feel that action can be best understood in the context of the history of the organisations of which they are part. When data that they are concerned with is produced by subjects, as in the case of official records, they want to know where, how and under what circumstances it came into being. Of what historical circumstances and movements are they a part. To divorce the act, word, or gesture from its context is for the qualitative researcher to lose sight of significance (Flick, 2007).

#### **4.2.4 HIGH DEGREE OF SUBJECTIVITY**

Another important characteristic of qualitative research is in the context of interpretation of the data. The word 'interpretation' means the assignment of significance or coherent meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Flick (2009), qualitative researchers interpret data by giving them meaning, translating them or making them understandable. This arises because, as Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2000, p.183) contend "qualitative research is done chiefly in words", and is descriptive in nature (Bogdan & Biklen, 2001).

A qualitative researcher has to maintain some degree of integrity especially in committing to foreground the authentic voices of participants. This is necessary because there are many opportunities for the researcher's personal influence to affect qualitative research. The qualitative researcher uses the study to learn what important questions are. She/he does not assume that enough is known to recognise important concerns before understanding the research. Understanding therefore develops during data collection and analysis.

In his/her search for understanding, a qualitative researcher does not reduce the pages upon pages of narration and other data numerical symbols. Instead, they try to analyse it with all

richness as closely as possible to form in which it was recorded or transcribed. Qualitative research has been described by some scholars as ‘anecdotal’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This is because it often contains quotations and tries to describe what a particular situation or view of the world is like in a narrative form. The written word is very important in qualitative research, both in the recording of data and disseminating the findings. Qualitative researchers are also concerned with process rather than simply with the outcome or product. Qualitative researchers want to know how people understand and make sense of their experiences and how they negotiate meaning through such experiences.

Neuman (2007) opines that the most important way that a qualitative researcher creates trust in readers is the way he/she presents evidence. A qualitative researcher provides sufficient texture and detail so that the readers feel that they are there. Unlike quantitative researchers who gather data after they have theorised, developed hypotheses, and created measures of variables, qualitative researchers begin with a research question and almost nothing else (Flick, 2009). Qualitative research is more inductive and interpretative. Qualitative research focuses on the experiences of individuals, and allows the reader to relate to other people’s experiences. Merriam (2009) says that a qualitative research does not seek to generalise one study to all other similar studies, but rather seeks to explain behaviour in one setting, which, if it reminds the reader of his or her setting has been successful.

#### **4.3 WORKING WITHIN AN INTERPRETIVIST RESEARCH PARADIGM**

According to Taylor, Kermode, and Roberts (2007, p. 5), a paradigm is “a broad view or perspective of something”. Weaver and Olson’s (2006, p. 460) definition of paradigm reveals how research could be affected and guided by a certain paradigm by stating, “paradigms are patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished”. As Bogdan and Biklen (2001, p.30) further say, “a paradigm is loose collection of logically held-together assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research. When we refer to a ‘theoretical orientation’ or ‘theoretical perspective’ we are talking about a way of looking at the world assumptions people have about what is important, and what makes the world work. Whether stated or not, all research is guided by some theoretical orientation.” On other hand, Martens (2009, p.6) maintain “a paradigm is the way of looking at the world. It is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide thoughts and actions, and therefore indicate a



theoretical orientation.” According to Martens (2009), there are three basic questions that a researcher should consider before choosing a particular paradigm that is appropriate for his/her research study and these are:

- a) The ontological question asks, what is the nature of reality?
- b) The epistemological question asks, what is the nature of knowledge and relationship between the knower and the would be known?
- c) The methodological question asks, how can the knower go about obtaining the desire knowledge and understanding?

Drawing from Marten’s position, I located this study within the interpretive paradigm. This is explained below.

This study is therefore located in an interpretive paradigm. Interpretivism and qualitative research are often used interchangeably as if they are the same thing. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that qualitative research is itself characterised by an interpretive approach. I found have adopting an interpretive approach because of it is concerned with understanding psychological and social phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved (Punch, 2013). According to Martens (1998, p.9), “reality is socially constructed” and “the researcher’s goal is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge.” Martens (1998, p.13) believes that “the inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process; each influences the other.” The assumption is that data, interpretations, and outcomes are rooted in context, thus the contexts in which participants are being studied are highlighted (Maxwell, 2004).

I chose to follow the interpretive paradigm because I wanted to understand the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of girls with disabilities in mainstream primary schools and how they negotiate their way through and around these. As Burns and Grove (2009, p.65) say “the purpose of interpretive research is to describe and also interpret experiences as they are lived in phenomenological terms, to capture the lived experience of study participants.” Martens (1998, p. 169) in turn says that “interpretive research emphasises the individual’s subjective experience. It seeks the individual perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The intent is to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participant. Furthermore, as MacMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.14) say, “qualitative research is based on a naturalistic phenomenological philosophy, assuming

that multiple realities are socially constructed by the individual and society”. I view approaching my participants with the intent of understanding their point of view as one way that last distort the subject’s out there capable of being viewed and experienced differently by different individuals. The goal in the interpretive research according to Morse and Field (2007, p.20) “is to provide an accurate description of the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, the goal of interpretive research is to describe accurately the experience of the phenomenon under study,” and not to develop generalization”.

#### **4.4 THE RESEARCH SITE**

The site of my research study is in the Ndwendwe area. My choice of Ndwendwe is because it is a remote area and young girls living with disability live in the area. This place is in deep rural area and its location is about 96 kilometres from Durban city centre. The population of the area is approximately 10000 people. The inhabitants of this community are affected by high level of poverty. In this community, there is no electricity or pipe borne water. The community has only a medical center. From my observation, there are only five nursing attendants in the clinic. There are four primary schools in the area. I decided to choose three primary schools from the four. The reason for the choice of the three primary schools is to ensure that I cover the study area as much as I can so that the findings of the study will be original and authentic. In each of the three schools purposively selected, there are about 180 learners, and an average of seven educators. In each of the school, there are about six blocks, 12 classrooms, four toilets and a football field.

#### **4.5 THE SAMPLE**

In this study, I adopted purposive sampling technique. From all indication, purposive sampling is virtually synonymous with qualitative research (Maree, 2011). In purposive sampling technique, the qualitative researcher actively selects the most productive participant(s) to answer the research question. In fact, this can involve developing a framework of the variables that might influence a participant’s contribution and this will be based on the qualitative researcher’s practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature and evidence from the study itself (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Purposive sampling permits the selection of available participants according to the purpose of the study

(Cohen et al., 2011). According to Merriam (2009, p.61) “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”. Additionally, Maree (2011) declares that purposive sampling decisions are not only restricted to the selection of participants but also involves the settings, incidents, events and activities to be included for data collection. The sampling was purposive because the study needed a small sample size six physical disabled girls between 12 and 16 years.

Since my study focused on girls with physical disabilities, I purposively selected two girls who are physically disabled in each of the school selected. In all, I purposively selected six participants for the study. Similarly, I also purposively selected one educator in each of the three schools. I want to state here that I decided to interview these educators in order to ensure the trustworthiness of my data.

In order to give a clear picture of my participants, a brief background of each participant is necessary and it is documented in the table below. Real names are replaced with pseudonyms so as to maintain anonymity.

**Table 4.1: BIOGRAPHIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

| Names | Biographies  |
|-------|--|
| Jabu  | Jabu is girl of 12 years old and was the youngest child, with two brothers and a sister. She is in grade 4. She had mother who was receiving the old-age grant and her family was largely relying on the pension received by her mother because one of her brothers and her sister were unemployed. Jabu has muscular dystrophy which means that the muscle fibres in the body are weakened over time. |
| Piti  | Piti had just turned 13 on 28 September 2014 and lived with her mother and stepfather. She is in grade 5. She is the eldest, having two brothers and a   |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
|            | sister. Piti has spina bifida from birth. The type of disability is caused by the abnormality of the spinal cord. Piti is partial paralyzed the legs.   |
| Futhi      | She was 12 years old in 2014 and she is living with her mother, stepfather, and a sister who was older than her. She is in grade 4. Futhi is suffering from physical disability known as Neuromotor impairment. Neuromotor impairment is caused by damage to the central nervous system (the brain and the spinal cord). With these conditions Futhi has trouble controlling her movements, therefore, she uses a wheelchair. |
| Hloniphile | She was 14 years old, did not have parents and lived with grandmother. She is doing grade 4. She is suffering visual impairment. Hlonipile's visual impairment was caused by congenital illness.  |
| Thando     | She was 13 years old and in grade 5. She lived in an extended family with her mother, two brothers, a sister and a cousin. She is suffering from hearing impairment. This hearing loss was caused by disease during pregnancy.  |
| Nduh       | Nduh is 11 years old, living with her mother who is working in a clothing factory and sister who was 15. Her father had been shot dead in 2008 when coming from work. She is in grade 4. Nduh is suffering hearing impairment caused by accident.   |

**Table 4.2: EDUCATORS' BIOGRAPHIES**

| Name    | Age | Qualifications | Experience |
|---------|-----|----------------|------------|
| Nosihle | 41  | B.Ed.          | 6 years    |
| Ningi   | 44  | B.Ed.          | 8 years    |
| Nyami   | 45  | B.Ed.          | 12 years   |

The educators selected are Nosihle, Ningi and Nyami. There are 41, 44 and 45 years of age respectively. The highest qualification possessed by these three educators is Bachelor of Education in foundation phase. These three educators have been teaching in their different schools for the past five years. However, Nyami is the deputy principal in the school.

#### **4.6 NARRATIVES AS A STRATEGY OF INQUIRY**

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher should search and explore a variety of methods until settling on one or more that in his/her estimation will best furnish him/her with rich data that will lead to a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study. My choice of narrative inquiry was due to my belief that this would best furnish me with rich narrative data that would lead to a deeper understanding of the lives and experiences of young girls with disability.

Narrative inquiry is increasingly being adopted in qualitative studies of educational experience. The main reason for the use of narrative in educational study is that human beings are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, tell stories about their lives. The study of narrative is the study of the ways human beings experience the world they live in. This implies that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories in which teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own stories. In addition, Lawler (2003, p.255) asserts that “If we want to find out how people make identities, make sense of the world and their place within it – if we want to find out how they interpret the world and themselves – we will have to attend to the stories they tell.” In light of the above, I used narrative inquiry in this study in order to listen to young rural girls with disabilities telling their lived experiences on ways they are excluded and included in primary education in the Ndwendwe area.

D’amant (2009) argues that narrative inquiry has the capacity to provoke readers to enter empathically into worlds of experience different from their own, and afford readers the opportunity to engage in experiential understanding regarding the perspectives, realities and experiences encountered. In choosing narrative inquiry as part of my methodology, I am hoping that readers of my research will enter empathetically into the worlds of my participants and so expand their understanding of the lived experiences of these young girls with disabilities.

## **4.7 METHODS OF DATA GENERATION**

Data was generated from the participants (young girls with disabilities and the educators) through semi-structured individual interviews. I used the designed semi-structured interview schedules to conduct face-to-face interviews individually with the girls and educators who made up my sample.

In face-to-face, the interviewer physically travels to the participants' location to conduct a personal interview. Aside from the above, face-to-face interviews offer advantages in terms of data quality. Therefore, individual face-to-face interviews afforded me an opportunity to explore issues which the participants (girls and educators) may not have felt comfortable talking about in the presence of other participants. In support of my choice of the face-to-face interview, Opdenakker (2006, p. 42) says that "social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language, among others of the participants will give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question". In the course of conducting the interviews, a tape recorder was used. Recording each interview and transcribing them at a later stage reduced the possibility of misinterpretation of participants' views (Graham & Hughes, 1990; Spradley, 2016 ). Furthermore, I made use of field notes to write certain issues that arose while conducting the interview.

The interviews I conducted with all participants were structured along the lines of informal conversations rather than formal rigidly structured interviews. This approach was taken to the data generation sessions in order to develop a relationship and trust with my participants and alleviate any stress and anxiety that a form of formal interviewing might manifest in participants. Couching interviews as 'conversational interviews' helps to formulate the purpose of the sessions as if they are social visits and simply conversations, thus shifting the idea of the researcher away from an overt authority and expert in the field, to an ordinary person, genuinely listening and interested in participants' individual stories about themselves and their lives or the work that they do (Merriam, 2009).

Conversational interviewing is regarded as synonymous with terms such as in-depth interviewing, free interviewing, narrative interviewing, creative interviewing and

unstructured interviewing (Schurink, 1998; Schurink, 2009). Unstructured interviewing is described as social interaction between equals in order to obtain research-relevant information (Schurink, 1998), or the establishment of a human-to-human relation with the participant with the desire to understand rather than to explain (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The advantages of unstructured interviewing are closely related to the objectives of qualitative methodology (Schurink, 1998), in that the unstructured interview best enables the researcher to obtain an ‘insider view’ of participants’ realities and experiences, thus allowing the opportunity for individual experiences and lives to be understood from the perspectives of the participants (D’amant, 2009).

Each interview lasted for half an hour in which the participants were encouraged to talk about their experiences as girls living with physical disability, and in the case of the educators, their experiences of teaching these young girls. The interviews were conducted in isiZulu as both the participants and I are first language speakers of the said language. I want to state that the recorded interview was conducted in isiZulu. Furthermore, I personally translated it into English language, thereafter, I subjected the interview to transcription.

#### **4.8 ETHICAL ISSUES**

This study involves young rural girls with disabilities and as with any other research work, the adherence to ethical standards is of major concern to me. Therefore, to ensure that this research work would not harm or cause disaffection between the research participants and me, steps were taken to ensure that my research was conducted ethically.

This study is an extension of Professor N. Muthukrishna’s larger project titled “The geographies of children schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers.” Professor N. Muthukrishna sought and obtained ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The ethical certificate (reference number HSS/0250/013) appears in the appendices of this dissertation.

Before I embarked on the interviews, I sought permission to conduct the research from the Department of Education (DoE) and then from the principals of the participating schools. Additionally, I sought permission from the parents of my participants. This permission was sought through a letter written to the parents. To ensure that the rights and dignity of the

participants were protected, identities were kept anonymous and pseudonyms were given. Research participants were also informed of their rights to refuse to participate in the research anytime they felt their rights are threatened or infringed upon. I made clear that their participation was voluntary. The use of a recording device was negotiated and agreed upon with participants before commencement of any interviews. The informed consent of the participants and their parents was also sought.

#### **4.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

As earlier explained, the data generated from the interviews was transcribed by myself. Open coding was used to code the data. I personally did it by using pencil and colour pen to identify words that are similar until saturation point was attained. Open coding is a critical stage in data analysis as it helps the person who analyses to organise the data into meaningful groups and finally leads to categorising themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the coding, the categorisation was done on the coded data, thereafter, themes emerged. It is the emergence of these themes that were subjected to narrative analysis. According to Thorne (2000), narrative analysis is a strategy that recognises the extent to which the stories participants tell provide insights about our lived experiences. Similarly, Reissman (2008) argues that narrative analysis is the ways in which researchers use stories to interpret the world. Drawing from Thorne's (2000) and Reissman's (2008) views, it is my intention to use my participants' narratives to make sense of and also to better understand the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of girls with disabilities in the mainstream primary school.

#### **4.10 ESTABLISHING TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Padgett (1998, p. 92) argues that "trustworthiness is not something that just naturally happens, rather, it is as a result of 'rigorous scholarship' that includes the use of defined procedures." Qualitative research therefore needs to take into consideration the reliability and validity of their findings to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. Dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability as trustworthiness criteria ensure the rigour of qualitative findings (Lincoln, & Guba, 2007; Loh, 2013).). According to Johnson and Waterfield (2004), these rigorous procedures include prolonged engagement, triangulation,



peer debriefing, member checking, negative case analysis, audit trail and reflexivity. These procedures are unpacked under the sub-headings which follow.

#### **4.10.1 VALIDITY AND CREDIBILITY**

Peräkylä (2011) argue that “validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the inferences researchers make based on data they collect”. Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 124) went on to say that “validity refers to how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them.” Morse and Field (1996, p.200) in turn refer to validity represent reality in qualitative research as “the extent to which the research findings represent reality.”

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) use the word credibility to refer to internal validity. Cho and Trent (2006, p.30) opine that “credibility is criterion in qualitative research that parallels validity in post-positivist research”. In qualitative research, credibility as Cho and Trent (2006, p.25) call it, would ask “if there is a correspondence between the way the researcher portrays their point of views”.

To ensure internal validity or credibility and thus ensure that I have actually portrayed the viewpoints of the participants in the manner in which respondents perceive their viewpoints, I conducted member checks. As Cho and Trent (2006, p.63) declare “this as the most important criterion in establishing credibility. The researcher must verify with the respondent groups the constructions that are developing as a result of data collected and analysed.” Lincoln and Guba (2007, p.314) also agree, describing member checking “as the end of each interview I would summarise what has been said and ask the participant what was saying. As Creswell and Miller (2000, p.127) say, member checks consist of “taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account.” With the lens focused on the participants, I was able to systematically check the data and narrative account. I had my participants view the raw data, that is, the transcription, and asked them to comment on their accuracy. In this way the participants have added credibility to my qualitative study by having a chance to react both to the data and to the final narrative. I also engaged in peer debriefing. As Creswell and Miller (2000, p.129) declare “a peer review or debriefing is the review of data and research process by someone who is familiar with research or the devil’s advocate, challenges the researchers’

assumptions, pushes the researchers to the next step methodologically, and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations.” I engage in the discussion with the peer not only about the data, the analysis, but also the interpretation. The responses from the participants were in the affirmative that the data reflect exactly what they said.

#### **4.10.2 EXTERNAL VALIDITY OR TRANSFERABILITY**

Maree (2011, p.78) says “transferability is the qualitative parallel to external validity.” This was echoed by Creswell and Miller (2000), who say that transferability is the construct corresponding to external validity or generalisability in quantitative research. External validity, therefore, as Neuman (2005, p.25) says is “the degree to which you can generalise the results to other situation.” In qualitative research, however, the researcher is not interested in making generalisation himself or herself. According to Healy and Perry (2000) “shift to the person (the reader) interested in determining whether or not the case(s) described can be transferred to other setting”. In other words, in qualitative research, Maree (2011, p.74) argues “the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the similarity between the study site and receiving context. The researcher’s responsibility is to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make judgment”.

According to Smith (2007, p.48), “thick descriptions are deep dense, detailed accounts.... Thin description, by contrast, lack detail and simply report facts.” Furthermore, as Creswell and Miller (2000, p.128) say, “the purpose of a thick description is to create verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study.” The readers who read the narrative accounts are therefore ‘transported’ into a setting or situation. I have endeavoured to describe the participants in detail, made the context of the research as vivid as possible for readers, and presented the narrative data in as densely descriptive a way as possible. Through these endeavours, I have hopefully enabled the reader to make decisions with regard to the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts.

#### **4.10.3 RELIABILITY OR DEPENDABILITY**

Merriam (2009, p.85) declares “dependability in qualitative research is parallel to reliability.” This is in accordance with Mason (2002, p.36) who says that “dependability is analogous to reliability. Just as reliability is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for validity, so a study that is valid must be reliable, then dependability is necessary, though not sufficient condition for credibility. Hence a study that is shown to be credible is also dependable.”

I used the trustworthiness that I described above in connection with validity to also specifically ensure dependability. I have also described in detail the data collection and analysis methods, and thus provided a trail that could be followed as to how the entire research was conducted and the final narrative arrived at. By constantly revisiting and reviewing the data collected through ongoing analysis, I have ensured that reliable and dependable interpretations flow from the data.

#### **4.10.4 OBJECTIVITY OR CONFIRMABILITY**

According to Maree (2011, p.98) confirmability “is the corresponding concept to objectivity.” Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1998), El Hussein, Jakubec and Osuji (2016) maintain that confirmability in qualitative research is parallel to objectivity. Objectivity means that the influence of the researcher’s judgment is minimised (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In qualitative research, confirmability means that the data and their interpretations are not figments of the researcher’s imagination (Eisner, 1991) or results manipulated by the researcher. Towards the aim of confirmability, I allowed my critical friends to review my interview transcripts to determine whether my interpretations of the data were supported by the data.

#### **4.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Choosing three primary schools when there are more than sixty primary schools in the Pinetown in a District could be regarded as a limitation, if the argument is adopted that the findings from only three primary schools cannot be generalised and be indicative of the entire population of primary schools in the circuit. “Narratives are not neutral attempts to mirror the

facts of participants' experiences, realities and meaning-making processes. Narratives can be judged and compared against each other, but there can be no right or wrong narrative, and no standard by which to measure any narrative against the meaning of events themselves, because the meaning of narrative experience is constituted in its narrative expression. Narrative pathways do not present and cannot therefore be interpreted or represented, as abstract or linear. Experience and life is fluctuating praxis, always in flow, fragmented, partial and ever messy" (D'amant, 2009, p. 140).

Thus, while each individual and personal narrative is particular, and while "the particularities of individualised experiences cannot be eclipsed by generalisation, or otherwise abstracted, reduced, or typified by totalisation" ( Berger , 2015, p.24), they can hold elements of the typical and generalisable. The research text can and should convey both the particular and the generalisable. While one cannot assume that the experiences of participants from these three primary schools applies to all experiences of people in similar situations and contexts, on the other hand, it can be assumed that there is a good deal of transferability to the experiences of others in similar situations across South Africa. The data collected which provided an in-depth understanding of the girls schooling experiences of living with disabilities, may therefore be considered worthy of some form of generalisability.

#### **4.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has outlined approaches to research that would allow me as the researcher to generate authentic narrative data from my participants, that would help me understand the way they experience and navigate the various inclusions and exclusions in their schooling experience. The chapter presents my rationale for choosing to house my research within the qualitative, interpretative approach and narrative inquiry. It has further outlined the process of selected methods of data generation, which would value participants' perspectives on their schooling experiences, and which would generate "rich thick description" (Polit, & Beck, 2010, p.1456).

My next chapter looks at the presentation and discussion of my findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In my previous chapter, I presented the research design and methodology adopted for the study. This chapter presents and discusses the data in line with the key research questions outlined in chapter one. Furthermore, I intend to draw from both my literature, conceptual and theoretical frameworks to understand the ways in which young girls with disabilities are excluded and/or included in the mainstream primary schools in South Africa. In other words, in this chapter the concept of inclusive education and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system theory adopted in the study are used to tease out how young girls living with disabilities are excluded or included in the mainstream primary schools in South Africa.

My discussion is presented according to the key research questions.

#### **5.2 YOUNG RURAL GIRLS' WITH DISABILITIES LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOLING**

The themes that emerged from the analysis were discussed below.

##### **5.2.1 DIFFICULTIES RELATING TO OTHER PEOPLE**

One of the key themes that emerged from the data, was the general inability of the young disabled girls to relate to other members of the community. Nduh reported that ever since she was born, her life has been a struggle. She hardly hears what people are saying. Most times she finds it difficult to hear what her parents are saying in Isizulu, not to mention hearing and understanding what her teachers say in the classroom. Nduh reported:

*“Let me tell you my sad story, I was born with this illness (deafness). At home, I cannot hear what my parents or siblings say. In the community where she lives, the situation is even worse because most times neighbours are not patient with me considering the fact I have difficulty in hearing”.*

Jabu's narrative was very sad. She said that as a child suffering from muscular dystrophy, her parents were ashamed of her. They always made sure that she remained indoors as they did not want neighbours to see her or have any contact with her. She was forced to live in isolation. These were Juba's words:

*"I lived a life of isolation since I was born. My parents realising that I am cripple, were in the habits of hiding me in one of the rooms in the house. I did not have anybody to talk to or play with".*

Hloniphile reported that initially her life as a blind child was a life of misery. She said that she attempted suicide on many occasions because she felt deserted and rejected by her parents and other family and community members.

According to Hloniphile:

*"Being a blind girl in the rural setting is very challenging. Initially, my parents felt that I am a great burden for them. I did not have a friend. The only person who was close to me was my grandmother until she passed in 2012. I attempted suicide on many occasions because of how I was treated by both my immediate families and neighbours".*

From the above narrative excerpts, it is clear that young girls with disabilities find it difficult to relate to other members of their communities and do not feel welcomed as a part of their family or community. Their experiences of rejection and isolation are due to their families and community labeling them as 'other' due to their physical disabilities. This resulted in these young girls with disabilities feeling unwanted, not good enough to be seen as part of the family or community, viewed as deficit and 'abnormal' and something to be ashamed of. This unfortunate rejection and isolation prompted one of these young girls to repeatedly attempt to take her own life.

These findings are in keeping with the position held by Kisanji (1995) who says that people's attitudes towards disabled persons are mostly always negative - that children with disabilities are often hidden away from public by the parents due to overprotection and shame.

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem, the family, school, and peer group significantly impact on the development of the child. A loving home with supportive parents, family members and community members would develop in young children a strong belief in

themselves as worthy members and participants of a family unit and a community. A sense of belonging is so important so young children as they are growing up, and this lays a strong foundation for the development of a positive self-belief, self-esteem and self-confidence. Having others believe that they are valuable members of a family and community, helps develop in them the self- belief that they are valuable. If children do not get this support and nurturing at a young age, they will grow up not believing in themselves as valuable or worthy of participating equally in life. This finding is in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological system theory that clarifies how children's environments can affect the way children grow and develop. In addition, this theory highlights the belief that children's social interactions with other members of their environment such as family, peers, caregivers, school, neighborhood, and cultural contexts serve as a panacea for the development of self-confidence and esteem in the classroom.

### **5.2.2 LIVING IN FRUSTRATION AND DEJECTION**

Another theme that came out strongly from the data was the finding that young girls with disability lived in a state of frustration and dejection. It was reported by Futhi that she always finds herself frustrated and dejected both at home and school because other children abuse and often call her names. Futhi went further to say that she felt humiliated when her siblings insult her.

*"Well, I must tell you the truth. I felt insulted when my blood brothers and sister tell me that I am 'cripple' and that I brought shame into the family".*

In the same vein, Piti was very clear in her narrative about the way she is mal-treated at school because of her disability.

*"Madam, I want to inform you that I am well treated at home, but in school when I was first admitted. I was seen and regarded as an outcast. Because of this maltreatment, I really dropped out of school".*

Similar to these two narrative excerpts, Thando said that the situation in the school when she first registered in 2012 had a devastating effect on her. She reported that she was ill-treated, isolated and left to exist in her own little world.

*“In fact, my situation when I first registered in this school cannot be explained. I was really looked down upon because of my condition. Most time I wish I should die because of the way the whole school treated me. I was always left alone in my own World”.*

From the narrative excerpts above, it is clear that my participants were excluded by their peers in the school. They were ill-treated even by the teachers because of their disability. The exclusion of these girls by their peers and educators while in school compelled them to be frustrated and dejected. By implication, the frustration and dejection experienced by these young girls necessitated them to have low self-esteem which often resulted in suicide attempts. This finding is in support of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological system theory that sees the instability and unpredictability of the school life as the most destructive force to girls’ development especially when they are discriminated against by their peers. When children do not have the constant positive mutual interaction with other peers that necessary for development, there is a very real possibility that this will limit and obstruct their growth and development.

### **5.2.3 PHYSICAL ABUSE AND INSULTS**

The physical abuse and insults of young girls with disabilities stood out strongly as a theme from the narrative data. Nduh said that she suffered serious physical abuses and insults from her peers in the class. Nduh reported:

*“Madam, I cannot explain to you the level of abuses and insult I receive on daily basis from my peers because of my condition. Children younger than me and even elder ones will come and talk to me stupidly. In fact, the insult I got from people daily cannot be explained”.*

In addition to Nduh’s narrative, Hloniphile explained her own version of how she was abused and insulted in the school by her peers. Hloniphile said:

*“Madam, to tell you the truth, I am tired of life. Because I am a blind person I am being subjected to all manners of abuses and insults. You can imagine when people call me impumputhe or Isiqalekiso (these terms literally mean blind child and*



cursedchild respectively) *because of my situation. This is very wrong and unacceptable*".

Corroborating these girls narratives, two of the educators (Nyami and Nosihle) reported that these young girls living with disabilities in the school are often abused by their peers and frequently insulted by their classmates. Nyami said:

*"I often heard their classmates abusing and insulting these girls living with disability. They called them (girls living with disability) terrible names"*.

In a similar development, Nosihle explained that she was very tempted to beat up some learners one day because of their constant abuse of these girls living with disabilities. Nosihle narrated:

*"It is very bad that I often witnessed these young girls living with disability being abused and insulted by their classmates several times. In fact, I nearly went against the school's rule by beating up some learners because they were abusing and insulting Jabu"*.

From the above narrative excerpts, it can clearly be established that girls living with disabilities, particularly those residing in the rural areas, are being abused on a daily basis. The negative reality of these girls being called derogatory names is not only degrading but outright dehumanising. This implies that they are seen as less than human by the school they attend and the community they reside in.

Drawing from the concept of exclusion, the findings indicate that these girls living with disabilities are excluded by their peers. Through the constant abuse and insults these young girls living with disabilities receive from their peers, and the reality that other children avoid associating with them, they experience social rejection, isolation and marginalisation. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological system theory, children's development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a regular basis over extended periods of time. However, where children are discriminated

against because of their disability, both physical and mental development can be the result in girls living with disability.

### **5.3 THE INCLUSIONARY AND EXCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS THAT EXIST IN THE SCHOOLING LIVES OF THESE YOUNG GIRLS**

The themes which emerged around inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics existing in the schooling lives of young girls with disabilities are as follows: attitudes towards disabilities, physical geography of the school, stigmatisation, inflexible curriculum and infrastructure of the school.

#### **5.3.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABILITIES**

Data analysis of the narrative of the individuals in my sample indicated that people's attitude is one of the main exclusionary dynamics that exists in the schooling lives of young girls living with disabilities. For instance, Piti said that in addition to the negative attitudes of her classmates towards her in the classroom, educators' attitudes towards her make her feel that she is not wanted in the class. Piti reported how she was looked down on by one of her educators.

*"People's attitude towards me is unfortunate. The most annoying part of it is the attitude of my class teacher. From her body language, I think that she does not like me because of how I am. This behaviour by my teacher prompted me not to go to school regularly".*

In a similar vein, Futhi was of the view that the negative attitudes of most of her classmates were very disturbing. She explained that the majority refused to play with her because of her disability.

*"Madam, I can tell you that the attitudes exhibited by majority of my classmates are very disturbing and unacceptable. They (classmates) may be playing, once they notice my presence, they will quickly disperse".*

A narrative excerpt from Ningi (educator) into the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that exist in the schooling lives of these young girls confirmed the experiences which the girls related, and gave a vivid narration of how learners in the school are fond of exhibiting negative attitudes towards the girls living with disabilities.

*“It is a common knowledge that learners and some educators alike showed negative attitude towards some of these girls living with disability. It is very unnatural that behaviour like that usually came up among learners and educators, however, there is nothing one can do since there is no law against such attitude in the school”.*

From the narrative excerpt above, it becomes clear that learners and educators alike do not feel fondly towards girls living with disabilities, nor do they treat them as such. Their prejudice and dislike is evident in the way in which they behave towards these girls. It is clear that these negative attitudes and behaviours towards these girls’ results in their exclusion from everyday social life in a mainstream primary school. From the data, it can be interpreted that the negative attitude of people towards girls living with disabilities implies the belief that they should rather be accommodated in a special primary school instead of a mainstream school. Girls with disabilities are seen and treated as ‘other’, and not accepted as ‘normal’ or equal in any way by their mainstream classmates.

These findings and interpretations are supported by research conducted by Sigelman, Adams, Meeks and Purcell (1986) who observed evidence of behavioural ‘stiffness’, where their participants moved around less frequently and engaged more in unusual self manipulatory behaviour such as touching their face or playing with their hair when interacting or communicating with a physically disabled person. From their research findings, it is clear that able-bodied people often feel uncomfortable and awkward around disabled people. Similarly, Antonak and Livneh (2000);Matziou, Galanis, Tsoumakas, Gymnopoulou, Perdikaris and Brokalaki (2009) argue that aside from the issue of negative attitudes towards people living with disabilities, people in the community exhibit some level of anxiety and negative prejudice in the presence of people with physical disfigurements and disabilities.

With regard to the issue of attitudes towards disabilities, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological system theory strongly warns against subjecting girls living with disability to all manner of negative attitudes, as such attitudes could have extremely negative results for these girls’ development and participation.

### 5.3.2 PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE SCHOOL

Another significant theme that emerged from the narrative data was the issue of the physical geography of the school. The way in which the school was planned and built significantly affected the girls living with disabilities. Hloniphile was of the view that she cannot navigate the school environment because it is not disability-friendly.

Hloniphile reported:

*“The way this school was built is complex. To move to my class, I have to seek assistance from my peers. The designers of the classrooms ought to have taken blind people like us into consideration when they designed the school”.*

Jabu explained that she could not enter her class without the assistance of either a classmate or an educator, because the entrance to the class was made up of steps that she could not get up with her wheelchair.

Jabu said:

*“Madam, I can’t explain how difficult it is for me to enter the classroom. The classroom entrance is made of steps, therefore, I can’t enter with my Isihlalosamasondo (wheelchair)”.*

When questioning the educators about the physical geography of the school which seemed to create physical barriers for the girls with disabilities, the three participants responded that the way in which the school was built did not help girls living with disabilities in accessing classrooms and other areas of the school. Nosihle responded:

*“You see, I pitied these girls with disability. They cannot move around easily because of the barriers erected unknowingly by the school. Imagine, most of them cannot access toilets, library, and playground because of the way these facilities were designed and built. My sister, the whole school was designed and built specifically for the normal children. Let start from the gate, there is no facility design for physically challenged children in this school”.*

Ningi reported thus:

*“I have watched these girls with disability every day. It is unacceptable to witness them struggling to either entering or leaving the classroom, toilets, etc. From the outset, the school authority ought to have planned for them by providing facilities that are friendly to these girls”.*

The above narrative excerpts indicate that the physical infrastructure provided by the government were designed and erected in accordance with the needs of able-bodied learners. This creates physical barriers for the learners with disabilities as it denies them easy physical access to places around the schools. This denial of easy and independent access is experienced as exclusion by the girls with disabilities who are attending a mainstream primary school. Research supports that poor accessibility to classrooms, playgrounds and toilets negatively impact the successful inclusion of learners with disabilities in a mainstream school (Colver, Dickinson, Parkinson, Arnaud, Beckung, Fauconnier & Thyen, 2011).

Making a physical environment welcoming and accessible to learners with disabilities has to be the first and most basic step any school can take to embrace inclusion. If doorways and entrances to classrooms and toilet access are not adjusted to suit the needs of learners with physical disabilities, then it goes without saying that the vision of educational policies and movements such as Education for All and Inclusive Education will be very difficult to achieve. This finding is in agreement with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological system theory that says that children’s ability to familiarise themselves with their physical environments and easy access to places such as the classroom, toilet, playground and the general sitting arrangement in the class, serves to positively impact on children’s development.

### **5.3.3 STIGMATISATION**

The issue of stigmatisation of girls living with disabilities emerged as a major theme from the narrative data. All my participants reported that they are often stigmatised by their peers and educators in the school. Futhi reported that whenever she moved nearer her peers in the classroom or anywhere else in the school, their negative reaction to her presence showed that

she is not welcome in their company. Her peers looked at her as an ‘outcast’ and dispersed and moved whenever she moved near them. Thando also described how she experienced being stigmatised because of being a deaf child. She reported that she was always laughed at whenever the teacher asked questions and she asked the teacher to speak louder in order that she could hear and so understand what was being taught. Thando responded:

*“Let me tell you madam, I am always referred to as Isithuli (deaf) in the school. The reason is that when the teacher speaks I hardly hear because of my difficulty in hearing. I have reported this matter to the principal but he failed to stop them from calling me such a name”.*

Piti added that she was nicknamed ‘*ingane eyinkubela*’ (crippled child) by the whole school. She reported that the principal of school indirectly promoted the stigmatisation by referring to her as ‘the child in the wheelchair’ whenever she wanted to talk to her or get her attention, instead of calling her by her real name. She reported the levels of stigmatisation towards learners with disabilities in the school as alarmingly high.

From an educator’s narrative, Ningi reported that the majority of the learners in the school stigmatised these girls with disabilities by calling them various derogatory and unacceptable names, such as: *umdiwembe* (evil child), and *ibhadi* (bad luck), among others. Another educator, Nyami, said that degree of stigmatisation of the girls with disabilities in the school was very high, and also was of the view that the names some learners give to these physically challenged girls are not at all acceptable. Nyami reported:

*“I would say that some names given to these girls with disability are not acceptable. I really have pity for them most times”.*

When asked what educators or the school could do to stop the stigmatisation, Nyami replied:

*“I cannot do anything. Do you expect me to beat those learners? No, I don’t want to lose my job. The school authority or government should come up with rule(s) that will stop it”.*

From the narrative excerpts, it is apparent that girls living with disabilities are often stigmatised by their peers and sometimes even by the educators in the school. Being subjected to such a high level of stigmatisation, it is no wonder that these young girls with disabilities suffer from low self-esteem and loss of self-confidence, and it is further no wonder that this negatively affects their academic performance and could even cause them to drop out of school, which is suggested by the findings of UNICEF (2012) research which found that the stigmatisation of children with disabilities acts as a barrier to school attendance.

It is also of great concern that individual educators feel they are powerless to change the reality of these girls with physical disabilities, for fear of losing their jobs. While they may not believe in perpetuating the negative prejudices aimed at these learners, they do not feel empowered enough or even spurred on by the courage of their convictions to pioneer a way forward in the school that would set a precedent of inclusive behaviour and attitudes. It is unfortunate that the reality of many educators is that change can only be instigated by the DoE, that is, from the top down, rather than from the grassroots level. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological system theory added value to this finding by saying that the social stigmatisation of girls living with disability negatively reduces their level of emotional development. In other words, Bronfenbrenner (1979) says that the negative stereotypes and images portrayed by society may become internalised for girls living with disability, hence limiting their physical stability.

#### **5.3.4 INFLEXIBLE CURRICULUM**

From the narrative data, an inflexible curriculum was another issue and theme which emerged. Girls living with disabilities reported that there are subjects taught in the school which did not have meaning to them. Furthermore, they said that the teaching strategy adopted by some educators excludes them. Hloniphile said:

*“If you look at subject like ‘life skills,’ to me some topics are so irrelevant. When I am told to study creative and visual arts or physical education, it is meaningless to me because I am a blind child who cannot see. Therefore, this subject instead of being a blessing to me turns to be a curse”.*

Piti added that teaching her how to build houses or bridges in a subject like Natural Sciences and Technology is useless because she would not be able to practically embark on any work which incorporated these skills because of her challenge. This is how Piti narrated her experiences and feelings:

*“Teaching me how to build houses and bridges in the subject like Natural Sciences and Technology is nonsense. How do I practice it when I cannot walk around? I cannot see myself succeeding in such profession in the future because it is meant for ‘able’ people”.*

One of the educators (Nosihle) interviewed on the issue of irrelevant curriculum, said that she was aware of the complaints by girls living with disabilities.

*“I have heard some of the complaints given by these girls concerning irrelevance of some subjects in the schools. One of the girls living with disability informed me that subjects like natural sciences and technology and life skills are not relevant to her because she would not be able to use, apply it in the real world situation of her disability”.*

Another educator (Ningi) interviewed, said that some girls who are disabled felt disturbed when she taught topics such as ‘personal well-being’ in Life Skills. Ningi said:

*“I felt unstable when some physical challenged girls moved out of my class because I mentioned areas that affect their disability in the topic”.*

From the findings, it has been established that some areas of the curriculum do not accommodate girls with disabilities. Educators felt uneasy teaching subjects which seem to expose these young girl’s physical challenges. This indicates that educator’s discomfort, unease and embarrassment around issues of disability and the barriers which these girls with disabilities are experiencing, may very well serve to further alienate and exclude these learners. Ignoring or side-stepping an issue does not help anyone overcome the challenges of a situation, but serves more often than not to perpetuate and even strengthen negative attitudes towards young girls living with disabilities realities and everyday experiences.



The issue of educators adopting the same method(s) in teaching the whole class without taking consideration of the specific needs of disabled girls, serves to further exclude these young girls living with disabilities. This finding supports the position held by Slee (2010), who reported that the style of teaching and learning, what is taught, the way the classroom is organised and administered, as well as instructional resources that are used in the learning and teaching process can negatively affect children living with disabilities.

### **5.3.5 PROVISION OF RELEVANT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE SCHOOL**

The provision of relevant infrastructure in the school was an important theme which emerged from the data.

According to Jabu, the toilet facility was one of her main concerns. Jabu responded:

*“The school’s toilet was designed for the comfort of the abled children in this school. Disabled children like me find it extra difficult to use the facility”.*

In a similar vein, Nduh contended that the distance involved in moving from the classroom to the toilet meant that she had to seek the assistance of someone to help her. Nduh narrated:

*“It is a pity that the school is not sympathetic to our plights. How on earth could the authority of this school sited school toilet 30meters from the classroom? It is difficult to navigate my way to the toilet because it is very far from the classroom”.*

Ningi’s view was in line with these girls’ statements when she declared:

*“Personally, I cannot understand why the school sited the toilets very far from the classrooms. Some of the children with disability find it difficult to access the facility because of the distance”.*

Similarly, Nyami reported that other facilities such as water taps were also located far away from the easy access of these girls with disabilities. Nyami said:

*“I will like to tell you that, the school has not only sited toilets far from the classrooms, other facility like taps where these children get their drinking water from are also sited from the classroom”.*

From the analysis and interpretation of the narrative data, it can be established that the provision of certain facilities far from the classrooms negatively affect the girls living with disabilities. They are unable to easily access these facilities because of where they are located in the school’s physical structure, and the reality that girls with disabilities have to overcome challenges and barriers such as stones, broken chairs and tables, grass, among others. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) chronosystem, it may be concluded that the location of certain facilities significantly affects the academic achievement of the girls living with disabilities. This is because they feel overlooked, unimportant and therefore excluded when facilities such as water taps, toilets and the library are situated a far distance from their classrooms. Such physical challenges could cause these learners to lack concentration in class.

#### **5.4 HOW THESE YOUNG GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES NAVIGATE THESE DYNAMICS OF EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION**

The major themes that emerged from this research question include: friends’ assistance, intervention by school governing body (SGB), and provision of counselling services.

##### **5.4.1 FRIENDS’ ASSISTANCE**

From the analysis and interpretation of the narrative data, it has been established that girls living with disabilities sought the assistance of their friends in order to overcome the exclusionary dynamics in the school. For instance, Hloniphile reported that she often sought assistance from her friends to do certain things for her, making particular mention of accessing the toilet. Hloniphile responded:

*“Madam, it is difficult to go to toilet alone because of my situation, but I have lovely friends who normally direct my way to and from the toilet”.*

Piti's narrative was not very different from Hloniphile's. Piti said that she had serious difficulty entering her classrooms and moving around her classrooms because of numerous barriers erected in the school such as erection of steps into the classrooms, location of toilets far from the classrooms and indiscriminate planting of flowers on the walkways, but that she was assisted by her friends. Piti said:

*“Initially, I had difficulty entering my classroom or move around the school compound. But this situation appears now to have reduced because of the assistance of my close friends who move me to wherever I wish to go”.*

In addition to Piti's view, Futhi explained that going to school was a nightmare because of either entering the classrooms or going to the library. Futhi maintained:

*“Sincerely speaking, going to school every morning is a nightmare considering the obstacles displayed on my way. First, my friends have to help me into the taxi. Friends have to assist me to move around with my wheelchair”.*

Confirming what these girls with disabilities said concerning how they navigate exclusionary dynamics, one of the educators, Nyami declared:

*“The fact is that they (girls with disability) on daily basis try to overcome the ‘barriers’ erected in school on their own struggle, but they are often assisted by their friends”.*

The various physical barriers such as stones in the school compound, the location of the toilets and library, among others directly affect the girls with disabilities from moving around easily or accessing certain facilities, and serve as ways which exclude these young girls from the everyday mainstream life and activity of the school. The young girls in my sample navigated their way around these barriers and potential exclusions, by utilising the assistance of friends to help them access the various places and spaces in and around the school that are necessary parts of school life. Drawing on the help of friends enabled these girls living with disabilities to navigate the potentially exclusive and inaccessible geography and physical structure of the school.

This finding is in line with the position held by Matson (2007) that inclusive education assists in the development of friendships between peers and prepares children for adult life in the community. It is heart-warming from the data that able-bodied learners are befriending and assisting these young girls with disabilities. The fact that the participants called them “friends” indicates that friendships are being made and bonds being forged between learners who have physical abilities. This is evidence that inclusion and inclusive education is, to some degree, being realised in this school.

This finding is strongly supported by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) notion of bioecological system theory which says that positive peer relationships for girls with disability assists them to re-organise some of their personal characteristics that serve to enhance their personal development.

#### **5.4.2 INTERVENTION OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (SGB)**

Another means of navigating their way around potential exclusions that emerged was the supportive role the School Governing Body (SGB) played in assisting and intervening on their part. Nduh narrated that she was assisted by the SGB with a hearing aid. She said:

*“I was surprised when I was called into the principal’s office last year. At the principal’s office, I met the chairperson of SGB. It was in the office that Izinsiza kuzwa (hearing aid) was given to me”.*

In the same vein, Jabu narrated how the SGB of her school assisted her to acquire a wheelchair. Jabu responded:

*“Look at this Isihlalosamasondo (wheelchair) which I am sitting, it was given to me by the SGB of the school. It really assists me to come to school on daily basis”.*

Nyami (who doubled as educator and deputy principal in the school) responded:

*“The school SGB has played a significant part in ensuring that these girls with disability are comfortable in the school. They often came to their (girls) plights by providing them with hearing aids, wheelchairs, audio recorder”.*

Nosihle corroborated Nyami's statement by saying that the SGB played a crucial role in ensuring that those girls living with disabilities were integrated into the mainstream primary school. Nosihle said:

*"The provision of different aids for these girls by SGB was to ensure that they are well integrated into this school".*

From these findings, it can be concluded that the SGB significantly plays a crucial role in ensuring that girls living with disabilities were adequately supported in the mainstream primary school. This was evident through their interventions such as provision of wheelchairs, hearing aids, and audio recorders, among other forms of support. The provision of such movement and learning aids helps these girls with disabilities navigate the dynamics of their physical disabilities and minimizes the potential exclusion in the school. The findings are in line with some sections of White Paper 6 which stipulate that the SGB should provide education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.

#### **5.4.3 PROVISION OF COUNSELLING SERVICES**

My participants were unanimous in their response to the provision of counselling services by the school. They responded that the provision of the counselling unit in the school impacted positively on their participation in the school, and that the school counsellor advised them to adjust to their present situations instead of lamenting and feeling as if they were powerless victims. Futhi responded:

*"I like so much the services rendered to some of us (girls living with disability) by the school. They provided us with counselling unit, in this unit the counsellor is always ready to assist us overcome our sorrow".*

Similarly, Piti responded:

*"This school does a fantastic job by providing us (girls with disability) with the counselling service. I nearly dropped out of this school, but I was counselled by the school counsellor to accept my situation as it is".*

Hloniphile added:

*“I want to tell you that the school counsellor is doing a marvelous job by making us adjust to the conventional life of mainstream school and we are happy with it”.*

When I asked the three educators about this issue, Ningi responded:

*“In line with the inclusive education agenda of this school, by extension that of the Department of Education, this school provided the girls living with disability with counselling unit in order to make them feel comfortable in the mainstream school”.*

Corroborating Ningi’s view, Nyami declared:

*“In my view, this school has done very well by providing the girls living with disability with a counsellor. Furthermore, looking at the adjustment mechanism put in place by the school, I have no doubt in my mind that these girls smoothly navigated from the issue of exclusion to the inclusion”.*

From the analysis and the interpretation of the narrative data, it was discovered that these young girls living with disabilities navigate these dynamics of exclusion through the provision of the school counsellor of support and guidance which significantly impacted the attitudes of the girls living with disabilities in this mainstream school. It is good to hear that support is being offered to these young girls living with physical disabilities and that they are being encouraged to be pro-active about their situations of potential exclusion - that they are being encouraged and supported to have a positive attitude and try by all means to overcome the barriers that they encounter as physically disabled learners in a mainstream school which does not necessarily prioritise catering to their specific needs.

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological system theory strongly canvasses for any positive support system that usually transpires within the school or community or a geographic place where families live and interact. It is believed that social support such as counselling services has both a direct and indirect positive impact on the girls living with disability, and assist girls living with disability in building self-confidence and development a positive sense of themselves.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the themes which emerged from the narrative data. In my analysis and interpretation of the findings, I have drawn from the literature, and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks which underpin this research, in order to make sense of the exclusionary and/or inclusionary dynamics which these young girls with disabilities encounter on a daily basis in a mainstream primary school.

The findings of the study indicate that girls living with disabilities have difficulty relating to many of their peers and educators. Furthermore, they are often subjected to all sorts of abuse and insults from both their peers and educators. General attitudes towards girls with disabilities, stigmatisation, the physical geography and structure of the school, and inflexible curriculum appear to create barriers for these girls which potentially exclude them from accessing a quality education in the mainstream primary school which they attend. This chapter has also presented ways in which these girls with disabilities navigate these dynamics of exclusion. The involvement, intervention and support offered by the SGB in the provision of movement and learning aids; the friendship, support and assistance given to the girls by their friends and the provision of supportive and effective counselling services to the girls living with disabilities, are three ways which help these learners navigate the barriers within the mainstream school and go some way towards minimising and overcoming these.

In the final chapter, I will provide a brief summary of my research findings and conclude this dissertation and offer recommendations in light of the data and themes which emerged and were presented and discussed in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In my previous chapter, I presented and discussed the findings of the study. In this chapter, the final chapter of my dissertation, I will present a brief overview of the study and summarise the key research findings of the study. Furthermore, I will make some recommendations for possible further research, and for interventions and educational programmes which will further the goals of inclusion and inclusive education.

#### **6.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

This research study has focused on the narratives of six young girls living with disabilities with specific investigation of the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics which they experience and have to find ways of navigating in a mainstream primary school, and the input of three of their educators. The objectives of the study included an examination of young rural girls with disabilities lived experiences of schooling in a mainstream school, with a view to determining the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that exist in their schooling lives, and examining ways in which these young girls with disabilities navigate these dynamics.

In line with these objectives of the study, the following three key research questions were developed to guide the study:

- What are young rural girls' with disabilities lived experiences of schooling?
- What are the inclusionary or exclusionary dynamics that exist in the schooling lives of these young girls?
- How do these young girls with disabilities navigate these dynamics of exclusionary and inclusionary practices?

Chapter two of this dissertation focused on the review of related literature. I started by looking at the different meanings of disability, classifications and types of disability, numbers of people with disabilities within South Africa, causes of disability and factors responsible for



the exclusion of children from schools in South Africa. Effort was made to examine the different South African legislation and policies related to people living with disabilities.

Inclusive education provided the conceptual framework for this study and Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model was used as the theoretical framework. Both these frameworks were helpful in understanding and unpacking the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics which impacted on the lived experience of girls with disabilities in a mainstream primary school in South Africa.

The research design and methodology adopted a qualitative approach and an interpretive paradigm to investigate and better understand the exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics of girls with disabilities in a mainstream primary school. The use of narrative inquiry and semi-structured individual conversational interviews, used to generate data, was selected with a view to adhering to the principles and practices of inclusion, wherein individuals are respected and supported regardless of their difference and learning needs. My intention was that the study foregrounds the authentic voices of the participants towards creating research which would help highlight and disseminates their real everyday experiences of being physically disabled in a mainstream school. It is my hope that the data generated and the analysis which emerged from this data, help towards building a better understanding of the experiences and needs of young rural girls living with disabilities.

### **6.3 SUMMARY OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS**

A number of key findings emerged from the data which the study generated. It is pertinent to reiterate that the concept of inclusive education and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system theory were used as a lens to understand ways in which girls living with disability are excluded or included in the mainstream primary schools in South Africa.

The data revealed that young girls living with disabilities often experience difficulties relating to other able-bodied people, due to the overall tendency of able-bodied people not wanting to associate with girls who have disabilities. This is mainly due to the negative attitudes and prejudices of individuals, schools and communities towards others who are physically disabled resulting in these young girls being isolated and rejected on a social basis. Findings

showed that learners and educators alike have negative attitudes towards these young girls and make them victims of their derogatory, exclusive behaviour. Findings also revealed that the parents of these disabled girls made them feel unwanted. These negative attitudes and behaviours translated as the girls having low self-esteem and a lack of enthusiasm for attending school.

As a consequence of these negative attitudes of others in the families, school and communities of these young girls with disabilities, the findings revealed that these girls faced physical abuse and insults on a daily basis both at home and school. They were called and labelled according to various derogatory names by both peers and educators in the school, which left them feeling humiliated. The emotional and physical trauma these girls suffered as a result of their disabilities, rendered them isolated and powerless, which translated as experiences of exclusion in their school life and in other social activities.

Another key finding which emerged from the study is that girls living with disabilities are stigmatised by both their classmates and educators. Names such as *Isithuli* (deaf), *ingane eyinkubela* (crippled child), among others, were given to these girls living with disabilities. Subjecting these girls to this degree of stigmatisation prompted them to have low self-esteem and loss of self-confidence, which indirectly negatively affects their academic performance which, in turn, potentially leads to these young girls considering suicide and dropping out of school.

It also emerged from the data that these young girls living with disabilities were able to navigate some of the negative barriers of their situation by making friends with some of the able-bodied learners who then supported them and helped them physically access difficult areas of the school. So from this point, the intended outcomes of inclusion were evident as learners were mixing and socialising and becoming friends across the barriers of diversity and different ability levels.

The findings also revealed that some aspects of the curriculum are experienced as exclusionary in that they do not accommodate or cater for the specific needs of these young girls living with disabilities. In the sense that mainstream physical education did not cater for these girls living with physical disabilities, and no alternative was offered; and that some

educators adopted the same teaching method(s) to teach the whole class regardless of diverse learning needs, the principles and practices of inclusion and inclusive education were not adhered to or followed by the school. Continuing with mainstream practices and curricula, inevitably translates as exclusion for these young girls with disabilities.

The physical structure and geographical layout and design of the school buildings emerged as another exclusionary issue for these girls, as they were not able to access some of the facilities due to their location and the nature of the terrain. These physical barriers significantly affected the academic achievement of these girls.

On a positive note, it emerged that the SGB significantly played a crucial role in ensuring that girls living with disability were adequately supported in the mainstream primary school. This was done through various interventions, such as the provision of wheelchairs, hearing aids, audio recorders, among others. Such physical support helped the girls with disabilities successfully navigate the barriers and dynamics of exclusion in the school.

Another area of much-needed support was offered from the school counsellor who listened to the girls and offered them advice and guidance, thus effectively supporting them in their effective navigation of exclusionary aspects and dynamics present in the mainstream school. From all indications, these findings are in support of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system which offers insights into how girls living with disability could be assisted by the family, peers, community, among others. Moreover, the adoption of Bronfenbrenner's theory in this study is helpful because it is inclusive of all of the systems in which girls living with disability are enmeshed and it reflects the dynamic nature of actual family relations.

## **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study focused on exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics experienced by young rural girls with disabilities in a mainstream primary school. This study was conducted in a deep rural area of KwaZulu-Natal. It would be interesting and beneficial to conduct similar studies in urban areas within KwaZulu-Natal and compare these results, and conduct similar studies in both rural and urban areas in other provinces within South Africa. Such studies would give

a comprehensive view to the experiences of young girls living with disabilities in mainstream schools.

Given that much of these findings from this study revealed the negative attitudes and behaviours, social and educational of peers and educators at the school, it would be a worthwhile recommendation to use such insights into developing intervention programmes across all rural schools in South Africa where awareness of learners and educators alike are raised with regard to the experiences of people living with disabilities. A concerted effort needs to be made to challenge traditional attitudes of negativity and shame about disability and then equip educators with the ability to adjust aspects of the curriculum in order to better cater for the individual needs of all learners, regardless of their diversity. In other words, all educators teaching primary schools in South Africa should be sent on training or workshops on ways of handling children living with disability, since it is clear that the majority of them teaching mainstream primary schools have little or no skill in curriculum development.

Further recommendations include:

First, awareness campaigns should be organised by various municipal governments in schools and communities to educate both the learners and parents on the possible behavioural changes towards girls living with disability. The negative attitude of people towards girls living with disability as outcasts should be corrected through constant face-to-face education. It is believed that when this is done, the high rate of dropout of girls living with disability will be reduced if not eliminated.

Second, it was established in the findings that physical barriers negatively affected girls living with disability from attending school. In light of this, the SGB should equally ensure that barriers such as the location of toilets far from the classrooms, the erection of steps at the entrance to classrooms, among other places should be removed to allow girls living disability to move freely without any hindrance.

Thirdly, the governments (National, Provincials and Municipalities) should come out with policies that will checkmate negative behaviour and stigmatisation of girls living with disability. It is believed that when policies are enacted and penalties given to offenders, this will encourage other girls with disabilities who may be hiding away from society and not

attending school due to the negative attitude of people towards them, to be more confident about attending school.

Lastly, from the findings it was discovered that the curriculum of mainstream primary schools result in the exclusion of girls living with disability. Learning areas such as Life Orientation are designed in such a way that results in exclusion of girls living with disability. It is my view that specific learning areas and the curriculum in general should be redesigned to accommodate these girls.

## **6.5 CONCLUSION**

Although our Constitution and other educational legislation such as White Paper 6, uphold the respect of diversity among individuals and social groups, it is clear that negative attitudes, derogatory labelling and stigmatisation and marginalisation of learners with disabilities, is still very much a reality in South African rural schools. While, in exploring exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics facing young rural girls living with disabilities, this study found an abundance of exclusionary dynamics which these girls are forced to deal with on a daily basis. It also highlighted areas of support that these girls are being offered such as the school counsellor and the interventions of the SGB. In the face of the stigmatisation, the forms of abuse and insult, aspects of an inflexible curriculum, and the physical design and layout of the school preventing easy accessibility for the girls with disabilities, the findings uncovered that these young disabled girls are making friends with able-bodied peers and are drawing on their assistance to access the various school facilities and buildings. This is a positive outcome from mainstreaming learners with disabilities, and is in line with what the intention is for inclusion and inclusive education.

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26 April 2013

Professor A Muthukrishna 845  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013

Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries:  
Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

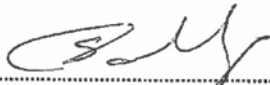
**Expedited approval**

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

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

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

Yours faithfully



.....  
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px






cc Dr P Morojele  
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids  
cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee  
Professor S Collings (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



## Appendix 2

School of Social Justice Education,  
College of Humanities  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus,  
ASHWOOD, 3605  
20<sup>th</sup> March, 2016.

Dear Parents,

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is **Ms Priscilla Manzi**. I am a Master of Education degree candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa.

I am interested in conducting a study on **EXCLUSIONARY AND INCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS: NARRATIVES OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN A MAINSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**. I want to interview your child about her experiences while she is in the school.

I want to inform you that the interview is for research purpose only. I want to state that **NO HARM** will befall the child in the course the interview. Moreover, the child's confidentiality is guaranteed. I sincerely hope that this request will be granted.

If you have authorised your child to participate in the study, please write your name and sign below.

Thanks.

Ms Priscilla Manzi

Name of parent.....Signature.....

### Appendix 3

School of Social Justice Education

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood campus

3605

25<sup>th</sup> March, 2016

Principal

.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **Permission to conduct interviews in your school**

I wish to seek authorisation to conduct interviews with some physically challenged young girls and one educator in your school. I am a registered for M.Ed. study in the Faculty of Education of the University of KZN. I am conducting a research on the topic, **‘EXCLUSIONARY AND INCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS: NARRATIVES OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN A MAINSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL.’**

I have already obtained authorisation from the Department of Education to embark on this interview. I want to state that the real names for both the learners and the school will not be used in the write up of the study and actual data from the research will only be used for the research purposes. The learners participate at their own free will and they are free to withdraw from the study at any point. I will do everything to guarantee the learners' anonymity and confidentiality. If you require any information, feel free to contact my promoter: Dr A. Damant Contact details: e-mail: Damant@ukzn.ac.za Your approval of this request will be appreciated.

Miss Priscilla Manzi

### Appendix 4

## Declaration

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project and I consent for the study to be conducted at .....Primary School.

I understand that the learners are at liberty to withdraw from the interview at any time should they so desire.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

### **Interview schedule for the young girls with disability**

- 1) What kind of disability do you live with?
- 2) How long did you live with it?
- 3) Does this disability you are living with start from birth? If so, how do your parents treat you?
- 4) If your disability started when you were born, can you explain how it happened?
- 5) As a physically challenge child, do your parents allow you to attend school?
- 6) If your parents do allow you to attend school, how do get to the school every day?
- 7) When you are in the school, how do other learners treat you?
- 8) Do you have friends in the school?
- 9) How do you relate with your friends if there is any?
- 10) How does your class teacher treat you in the classroom?
- 11) Can you explain in detail how you relate to your class teacher?
- 12) Please explain to me the kind of supporting system the school provides for you?
- 13) Can you explain what the school is doing to support you academically?
- 14) What is the school doing to support you emotionally?
- 15) Do you think this school has done enough to support you?
- 16) In what area do you really need support from the school?
- 17) In your opinion, are you happy with these supports?
- 18) What do you think should be done to ensure that you continue with you schooling?

### **Appendix 6**

### **Interview schedule for Educators of rural girls with disability**

1. How long have you been teaching in this school?
2. Since you were appointed as educator, have you at any point in time taught a young girl with disability?
3. What are some of the barriers that young girls with disability face in your school?
4. Can you explain those dynamics that influence either the inclusion or exclusion of girls with disability in school?
5. Please explain to me different strategies you have adopted in teaching her.
6. In your opinion, does the girl with disability follow your teaching like other normal children?
7. As educator, do you understand what the White Paper 6 says with regard to learners with disability?
8. Can you explain the manner in which you have implemented this White Paper 6?
9. In your opinion, do you think the White paper 6 is 'religiously' followed in this case?
10. In your view, what do you think should be done to fully bring girls with disability into the mainstream primary school?